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HERALINE;

OR,

OPPOSITE PROCEEDINGS.

BY

LÆTTIA-MATILDA HAWKINS.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

Quand on ne trouve pas son repos en soi-même, il est inutile
de le chercher ailleurs.—ROCHEFOUCAULT.

LONDON:

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TO

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE DUCHESS OF GLOUCESTER.



MADAM,

THE apprehension which a female writer must feel, in submitting a work to the judgment of the Public, naturally leads her to court some patronage that may ensure success, or some influence that may support under the want of it. The most powerful patronage is that of a splendid name; the most consoling influence is that of exemplary virtue. Both these I have felt it incumbent on me to seek at the present moment; and having found them united in Your Royal Highness, I presume, by your

permission, to request your gracious reception of this very humble attempt to insinuate what may be profitable on reflection, under that which may be amusing in the perusal.

It is a privilege which I esteem most highly, to be allowed thus publicly to profess the firm attachment of myself and of my family to your august House, and my unfeigned admiration of the moral and religious excellence by which Your Royal Highness has gained the affection of every subject of the British dominions..

Your Royal Highness's

Most devoted and

Most obedient humble Servant,

LÆTITIA MATILDA HAWKINS.

HERALINE.

CHAPTER I.

WHOEVER has inclination and opportunity to make the tour of the south-western coast of our island, and can afford leisure to deviate nine miles from a high road, may, with some little trouble indeed, frequent jolts, some considerable inequality of ground, and perhaps not entirely without the apprehension of a fruitless search, find, if he has turned the right way, the romantic village of St. Emeril, occupying the lower stage of a very lofty cliff, which, sometimes abrupt and precipitous, sometimes gently sloping, and wooded to the water's edge, seems to shade off its verdure with almost imperceptible graduation of colour, into the glaucous hue of the sea with which it unites. The perpetually-recurring waves, confined by two prominent head-lands, have scooped for themselves a perfect semicircle, and in making a convenient little bay, appear to have compelled the shore, and every thing on it, to retreat into a form the most agreeable to the eye. Tranquil

cheerfulness of aspect, counteracting the seclusion of the spot, and sunshine, tempered by balmy gales, give the place an indefinible power of pleasing, on first acquaintance; while its unfatiguing, yet, in the aggregate, grand irregularities, the rich country about it, and the awful object below it, might make any who could live without the world, or who had lived too much in it, wish himself an inhabitant of Saint Emeril.

There is no rural scenery which a church may not decorate; and that of Saint Emeril, with its attendant vicarage-house and cultivated glebe, is one of the most picturesque. Placed above the principal cluster of the houses in the village, and far below the elevated mansion and domain of its patron, its local circumstance bespeaks the reception of good from above, and its distribution of its benefits to all below it.

The noble and ancient edifice which gives the character of importance to this scenery, is seated nearly at the summit of the highest irregularity of the cliff, admitting nothing above it but a protecting wood, sufficiently distant to allow of the intervention of a part of the home-park, which slopes down the western side again, as if leading to the sea, and forms the most beautiful verdant background to the landscape, while the wood itself wards off the attacks of the north wind, which

might injure the character of Italian celebrity challenged by this spot. Around the mansion is to be found every thing that constitutes the grandeur of an English nobleman's inheritance ; and St. Emeril's Court may vie with any of its compeers, in all the essentials of beauty and greatness. An abundant revenue is attached to it ; and he who is unhappy at St. Emeril's Court must be out of the reach of that happiness, which the good things of this world are thought able to confer.

But mankind are ingenious to their own hurt; and St. Emeril's Court has been sometimes, like other persons' courts, rendered uncomfortable by the want of a little judgment in the possessors. It was, at the time now to be spoken of, and had for centuries been, the principal seat of the Earls of Lynford in succession. The earldom was entailed on male-issue; but by the limitation of the patent, the barony might descend to a female. The estates might be separated from the title, at the will and pleasure of the possessor.

There were in the last century many such men, noblemen and gentlemen, as the last Earl of Lynford. He had been, early in life, what was then called a *gay* man, never notoriously vicious—there was decorum in his transgressions :—but the natural consequence of this species of early gaiety, was that, in his latter years, he was a very *dull* man :

he was not, indeed, of the preposterous set of disgusting veterans: he gave up pleasures as pleasures gave up him; but having no substitutions, he lost all the value, all the satisfaction, and all the respectability of the most important, because the closing period of human life. He had possessed a very fine person, which kept him an antiquated beau, and a very strong constitution, which, under his management, became the means of protracted suffering.

Till fifty, he lived single for the sake of liberty, and had therefore shackled himself in successive situations of ineligible slavery; but it was always his intention, as he told himself on every return of weariness or vexation, to *free* himself from this liberty, and to marry in time to disappoint his heir-at-law. When he determined to begin to seek a wife, he also settled in his own fancy what sort of a wife he should seek, and, fortunate in all his wishes and plans! he was so far blest in his pursuit, as to find the woman whom his imagination had presented to his judgment, and to find her disposed to accept him.

Forming his decisions of what women ought to be on the extreme contrary of what he thought them, he selected as the most manageable thing, a pretty sickly piece of still life, very young, very harmless, whose situation in the world rendered

her gratitude for advancement matter of course ; and he had no cause to accuse his judgment of misleading him : he meant her to be powerless, and powerless she was : he wished for a woman who should have no will of her own, and none she had—at least, if she had, she did not know it when she met with it ; but this ignorance not always leading to the adoption of the will of another, his lordship was a little subject to the fluctuations of caprice.

Having skimmed the cream of this world's rich pastures, and avoided, as the alloy of satisfaction, all acquaintance with less palatable though more wholesome nutriment, he knew not the contrary operation of things too simple, in *his* opinion, to have any operation. In choosing such a wife as comes under the denomination of 'a poor soul,' he had made no calculation of the compounded qualities of *poor-soulism* ; he had not provided in his mind against the cobweb-spinning of inert tyranny, which will bind a giant to the wheel of Ixion : he forgot the gentle exactions of selfishness, which make the slaves of another's imbecility, forego necessary recreations to perform irksome petty duties : he was not aware of the panoply of presentiments, dreams, old sayings and forebodings, with which the votaries of 'poor-soulism' can defend themselves, and annoy, without movement,

those who stand within their aim. He gained all this useful knowledge as he proceeded in his state of wedlock, and he could desire no better an instructor than that which he had formed for himself; for *his* 'poor soul' being newly raised to consequence, and unused to attentions, was particularly tenacious of her privileges, and, to do her justice, made the most of them. The earl was very much in the situation of a friend of his, whom he had ridiculed unmercifully for refusing to buy a fine horse, of docility that seemed almost intellect, and purchasing a poney, no bigger than a Newfoundland dog, because it *must* be such a gentle creature! The experiment of his gentleness had ended in a broken arm, which, as Lord Lynford said, any one might have foreseen who had ever considered, that the want of power to be a help, does not imply want of power to be a hinderance. The theories of some wise men are better than their practice.

His movements were now directed by all the quarter-masters of medicine; and as they issued their mandates, he was to be found at Bath, Brighton, Cheltenham, Harrowgate, or Tunbridge, sometimes bearing her ladyship's muff and fur-tippet, and at others carrying her parasol over her head, and her shawl under his one arm, while she hung upon the other, which, with all his compliance

and accommodation of posture, was hardly within her reach.

But in little more than two years, and just in time to save the sweets of such matrimony from the disgrace of cloying, the hope of an heir reconciled all things, and coming when his heir-at-law, that lord of his destiny, had particularly offended him by representing the extreme poverty in which he allowed him to starve, as disgraceful to his lordship's own dignity, it was doubly a delight. Such an affront occurring just at the time when it was the earl's intention to have a succession of sons to carry down to posterity the honours, and to spread far and wide the reputation of his house; when there was every prospect of 'a bevy of fair damsels,' whose alliance should be sought by all the peerage, lost nothing of its power of offending; and as, whatever was the general character of *blankness*, if the word may be used, which belonged to the earl's identity, he was nevertheless of headlong inconsiderateness of action, and bitter perseverance in his hostilities, the measure of remonstrance was as unfortunate as it was imprudent.

It is the fate of high hopes to lower their crests if made to wait, and of ardent expectation to cool under the discipline of enforced patience. So sad a tedium—such solicitude—such apprehension

preceded the arrival of the heir—his lordship was so grievously made a partner in all the suffering he could possibly share, that perhaps he did not wish for a repetition of the trial. When therefore Time, one of

‘ the mighty two,

‘ That bring our wishes nearer to our view,’

had done all in his power for him,—though death broke the mould in which his expected blessing was shaped,—his grief was not fatally excessive. The countess, in becoming a mother, had indeed herself become a corpse ; but he could admit the conviction that he was but in the situation from which his philosophical nuptials had disturbed him, and with the gain of such an heir as would at least cut out his ill-advised relation. In one point he behaved better than some other fathers ; he was not angry with his ‘ poor soul ’ for bringing him a daughter, nor with the child for not having chosen the superior sex.—Years must, he well knew, pass, before it would be necessary for him to adapt his fatherly counsels to existing circumstances : whether boys or girls, children must be nursed, fed, and drest, for a time, much in the same way. He knew that servants were the proper ministers in such politics, and to them he must confide the infant, be its sex what it might ; therefore, at present, he could know no inconvenience. He was

not, however, destitute of interest in the little lady—he intended seriously to live to see her of age and married. And, on the whole, he thought, whenever he *did* think of her, that she might prove a greater comfort to him than a son could be.

His lordship had, previous to this event, passed nearly three years in a way, and under restrictions, entirely new to him. As he had no inclination to continue this plan, he declined all overtures to a second marriage made to him by his neighbours, told plain truths to young ladies, and gave their mammas to understand that he had not, with his lady, lost his sagacity. He considered himself as having so much lee-way to fetch up in life, and could not be ignorant that he had no time to lose. He therefore ordered his house in Grosvenor Square to be got in readiness, and prepared to enter again the aristocratic world, not in any new character of statesman, Mæcenæ, or philanthropist, but in the character he had quitted, that of a *façade* peer, for to no other part of the venerable building composed of our three well-proportioned estates, could he be said to belong.

The name to be given to the important damsel, was matter of serious consideration. The poor deceased mother had a partiality for her own, which happened to be Phœbe; but his lordship

could not bring his ears, as he said, to ‘digest’ the Lady Phœbe. His own, feminized, would have been uncouth. He wished for something, he said, ‘impressive, and which should, at the first blush, convey an idea of the rank and elevation of her who bore it.’ He sent for the vicar, who had been his college-tutor, and complimenting him, with a sigh of self-commiseration, on *his* learning, revealed to him his plan and meaning—assisted him to comprehend it, by some efforts to recollect what he had met with in ‘his small stock of knowledge,’ and concluded with a confidential query on the probable success of his hunting in Pope’s *Iliad* or *Odyssey*—‘where,’ he said, ‘he remembered there was plenty of grand names, Alcibiades and Hermione and Chryso—something that always, Mr. Meryon,’ for so was the vicar called, ‘might remember—and to *his* shame, gruelled him—or perhaps in that other old Grecian, who wrote very much in the style of Gay, as Mr. Meryon had remarked to him, he well remembered—Theocritus—or his countryman, Catullus.’ He should like ‘something that meant little lady or mistress, better than any thing—he wished he could recollect what mistress or lady was in Greek, but his Greek went a very little way, as Mr. Meryon well knew: the character always was an obstacle with him, but he believed so it was

with many—once over that, and the Rubicon was passed: he could not but think the printing Greek in the common type, like newspapers and Bibles, would greatly facilitate the study of it.’

The vicar did not wander after the earl’s peripatetics: he stuck to the text given him to preach on, and gave the Greek for mistress, but said, ‘Your lordship would not like Lady Despoina.’

‘Well! what should it be in Latin?—Domina, I suppose—Domina,—no, it would not do, the Lady Domina Beltravers—the right honourable Lady Domina Beltravers—it strikes my ear as tautology.’

‘What say you, my lord, to Heraline?’

‘Does that mean what I want? I recollected only Domina; but mine is a sad treacherous memory—I’m not so young as I was.’

‘*Hera* is common for mistress—you have it in Terence; and the English diminutive would make it tolerable.’

It was decided—‘Heraline it should be,’ and Heraline it was.

Leaving, therefore, the Lady Heraline Beltravers, whom he had generally recollected to call for, while settling his steward’s weekly accounts, to all the advantages of her native air of Devonshire, under the care of her nurses, the earl was on the point of setting off on the adventure of recovering suspended enjoyments, when the young

woman, a tenant's daughter, whom the appointment of superintendent of the nursery had raised to the style of *Mrs.* instead of *Molly* Parr, seeing the post-chaise door opened, and despairing of a summons, ran down stairs with the baby to ask his parting blessing on it. He expressed himself not at all angrily at being reminded and detained : he even put on his spectacles to look at its minute features, remarked that its fingers very much resembled shrimps, patted its soft cheek, called it ' poppet,' and dismissed it with an injunction, that at least made him who uttered it laugh, to be very good till he came back.

At what period of life, three years may be best lost, is a question scarcely worth an answer ; the sum-total of those he had to redeem, seemed to Lord Lynford to amount to thirteen, when he began to ask himself, on returning to his pursuits, where he left off. Had he not been interrupted in his gentle course down the stream of time, he might have persuaded and flattered himself into his own good opinion ; but when he was to compare himself with himself, on the ground which he had formerly occupied, he could not be insensible to a far greater degree of alteration than he had suspected : the increased rigidity of his muscles—the tremulousness of his hand—the bilious yellow that suffused his eyes—and the scarlet net which over-

spread his cheeks, were made evident to him by returning to disused flights of stairs, by every thing which he attempted to move, and by every mirror to which he made appeal.

But the most decisive experiment which he made of his treacherous powers, was that which he adventured in the ermined assembly of his dignified equals, whose attention he had previously bespoken, and to whom he now introduced a subject on which he conceived himself qualified to speak, merely because it had come of necessity under his private cognizance.—He mistook the having been shut out of the world, for retirement from it, and fancying, if the allusion ever suggested itself, that his three years' silence must have been equivalent to the five of Pythagoras, he dubbed himself in his own conceit a legislator, and with great parade of written documents, and calling to his aid the good offices of the press, he laid the foundation of an unanswerable argument, and erected it with all the decorations of captivating eloquence. That nothing might be wanting to the grace of his delivery, he made himself perfectly acquainted with his own intentions by rehearsals; and constituting the reflection of his own figure in the mirrors of his apartments, the House of Peers, he felt it, though at first a little awful, very possible to face those whom he was to address: he

practised all the etiquette of the veritable scene, and making the sound of his own voice answer every purpose for which the lion lashes his sides with his tail, he found himself very comfortably warmed with his subject. Another great advantage he reaped by this exertion, the increased conviction of the strength of his reasoning—for, as the auditory to whom he *submitted* this act of presentation, certainly, neither by voice, look, or gesture, expressed the smallest dissatisfaction, the tendency of his endeavours, like those of most soliloquists, was rather upwards in his own private appreciation. Sitting down after this heat, he felt the transient passage through his brain, of some line or words that had escaped from their original locality in his memory, but not entirely from the fortress of memory itself—*vis* and *flere* came forward on a tap given to his forehead; and though he could not get their comrade-right-and-left-hand-men into their proper foot-hold in the rank, he got them in time sufficiently drilled to extract another corroborative comfort, and to reason out by analogy, that if a writer may weep to make a reader weep, a speaker convinced must reckon on a convinced auditor; and, that as numbers, be they ever so large, are, after all, but a congregation of units, a House of Peers can be only a sum-total of individuals; and that having convinced one, to the de-

agree which he found his own conviction reached, the business was done.

Every thing being prepared, he took advantage of one of his good days, and in a costume from which a very unwise departure has since been made, and which on this occasion had called forth some little addition of attention, he appeared in his place and character.

There was one, and perhaps one only contingency against which he had not provided ;—he had not calculated on that which he might not know ; and in this comprehensive class of things was to be found the sum and substance of the very laconic reply which his motion drew forth—the answer was, in quickness and effect, an extinguisher ; and he backed out in the dark, with all eyes upon him.

He was startled, but he was not discomfited, or sent back in dismay to Devonshire. If his confidence in good days, for which he had hoped, was abated, it was still of importance to put off the evil days which he might fear ; therefore he persisted in his course of what he called, perhaps hoping to hear it pronounced needless, ‘ re-juvenizing.’

One consolation he had ; he saw many to keep him in countenance, who had not laboured under the disadvantage of his three years’ servitude to Hy-

men : he found men of his own standing, still more hardly driven to keep up appearances ; and when he confessed himself a craven in the lists of dissipation, he found himself, not by many, the only one to whom flannel and digestive pills were more appropriate. He listened patiently to men of rank and education, whose memories he was astonished and delighted to find a very pharmacopœia ; he obtained regular prescriptions, and gave credit to erratic nostrums ; and taking the advice of persons whose doctrines were founded on that best basis, experience, he turned his attention, more, indeed, than he had intended, or foreseen as necessary, to keeping the battered fabric of an ill-used constitution in tenantable repair. He made a long season in London, but remained there in a nicely-adjusted state of regulated quietude. He dressed with scrupulous precision, was made up carefully, took his chocolate and eggs in the intervals of his toilette, read the papers, aired regularly in his carriage, left his tickets or made his visits personally in all the forms of the time when he flourished, avoided all temptations to indulgence of the palate, and all occasions of excitation, took his name out of the club which had been one of his principal attractions to London, and generally got a friend or two to partake a table, which, whatever covered it, uniformly afforded a morsel of boiled mutton, a

roast chicken, and a light pudding for himself. Two glasses of Madeira were his stint of wine : he shunned tea as nervous, and supper as oppressive : he had his afternoon-nap, for which he apologized to his visitors in terms never varied, by quoting Sir Matthew Hale's advice to ' educate the old man betimes.' He detained some one friend till slipper-time, took some balsamic preparation, as he said ' by way of nightcap,' and then, with the reminiscent sentence, ' It is high time for such as me to think of departing,' consigned himself, at a very wholesome hour, to his valet and his dressing-apparatus, to be, in his own phrase, ' made decent ' again for the morrow. It was pity that any thing so regular should be so useless. His emblem was a watch without a dial.

A pattern of life so well cut out, required few alterations to fit its wearer, and, perhaps, admitted of few improvements that would not have endangered its whole constitution. But in adopting or submitting to it, Lord Lynford was hardly justified in comparing himself to those great men, with whose biography he now amused a damp day, parried an east wind, or soothed the nausea of medicine. He talked, indeed, of ' *Otium cum dignitate*,' and he had picked up some *truisms* in the course of his novel recreations, which struck him as ' amazingly fine'—and for

this sole reason, that they came down to his comprehension. He complimented his own sagacity, when he met with these ‘amazingly fine’ sentiments, by challenging them as having often occurred to *his* mind. He might not have said the thing quite so well, he acknowledged, but it was what he had thought fifty times. One great advantage attended this well-arranged system—it served equally for all the days of the week, and pretty nearly, by shifting his quarters and running after London, for all times of the year. In the general distribution of his time, his diet, his medicines, his airings, visits, and looks engrossed his most serious thoughts ; and when he settled his accounts or took up a book, it was, as he himself was sensible, relaxation :—he called it, and very justly, ‘getting out of himself.’ As churches were all dangerous places, and chapels little less so, he was precluded from this Sunday-variety. The Bible he left to the clergy, as their sole indefeasible inheritance ; and of a future state he thought just so much as to hint occasionally, that he supposed he stood the same chance as most other people ; ‘he knew not,’ he said, ‘why he should not ;’ and indeed he was very right. With these deductions, therefore, from the power of altering, Sunday was thrown into the week, and gave him no trouble in marking its return or fulfilling its purposes.

The resorts of the sick and the idle took their stated turns as places of his habitation ; but he lingered in London as long as he could with any decency, and returned to it with the first men of his rank. One month in the year was as long as he could give to Devonshire and Lady Heraline : the air he thought relaxing ; and the child, he facetiously observed, grew quite as much while he was away as when he sat by to watch it.

CHAPTER II.

THE five first years of the little ‘baroness *in potentia*,’ as her father tickled his own fancy in calling her, passed in a way convenient to these movements of the earl, that is to say, she remained stationary. Mrs. Parr clearly seeing, and very excusably consulting, her own interest in her situation, employed her abundant leisure in fitting herself for a continuance in her post. She improved her handwriting, and extended her arithmetic under the tuition of the new village-schoolmaster: she also obtained a notion of parts of speech, and the divisions of the globe. With the kind assistance of the vicar of the parish, who knew her good qualities, and wished well to her endeavour, she gradually obtained as much of general knowledge and popular science, as might last the pupil and satisfy his lordship for some years; but a basis of good sense, not even Lord Bacon could have given her: her capacity was limited, her ideas were sordid; to escape blame was her care, and to keep her station her utmost ambition. She had as much of religious principle and information as had been given her by her parents; and being very ignorant of the world, she seemed hardly to know that it was

necessary, that the young heiress of St. Emeril's should be wiser than herself. A neat appearance, old-fashioned civility, and respect almost amounting to awe, were her shining virtues in the eyes of the earl.

At the end of these five years, a necessity occurred to the recollection of Lord Lynford, which seldom escapes that of any parent whose child is to occupy any station in the world—this was the necessity of an early familiarity with the French language: the want was soon supplied; and as it was a point on which there could be no appeal from his lordship's perfect information, it was supplied in the very best way. A young girl who had had opportunities of acquiring a good style of speaking, by having been the *protegée* of a French family of rank, was imported from Paris itself: that she was ignorant of every thing besides, was no objection; and that she was utterly destitute of all moral principle, was perhaps not exactly specified in the description of her qualities. Mrs. Parr was not pleased with the association, nor long ignorant of the reduction it occasioned in Lady Heraline's respect for her first teacher; but she had no option, except that ineligible one of retreating—the pacific result may therefore be guessed.

Another two years, the suggestion of the earl's

own knowledge of the fit and the requisite, and the hints of lady-friends in the ten-mile distance of Devonshire-neighbourhood, induced other necessities ; and masters were now paid high to come from Exeter to St. Emeril's, to give lessons in music, dancing, and whatever could be ornamental to a lady of fashion and polite accomplishment. It was matter of pride and emulation to be engaged for this purpose ; and the fame of Lady Heraline Beltravers was, without any impulse but that of individual interest, or any effort but that which well repaid the bearer, carried far and near to the houses of the great, and the places of education of the little.

Character did not long lie dormant in the bosom of Lady Heraline, and under even the involuntary tuition of Mademoiselle Annette, it developed itself with ease. Mrs. Parr still retained her supreme authority, and Annette was only *fille de chambre* ; but her lessons went infinitely faster and farther than all Mrs. Parr's. Three words in a language which the poor Englishwoman could not understand, would decide a question against her : the shrewdness of Annette detected Mrs. Parr's shallow pretensions to knowledge ; and under the communication subsisting between the little lady and her maid, she must have experienced a degree of contempt, that might have made even *her* situation intole-

rable ; but there was, most happily for her, implanted in Lady Heraline's nature, a strong recoil to what was right, whenever warped to what was wrong ; and when she had suffered herself to treat Mrs. Parr very unpardonably, through Annette's influence, she would quit her base corrupter, and take the side of the sufferer with tenderness and pity.

That in this insulated situation the young lady should not have assumed high notions of herself, her importance, and her power, was impossible. She saw a house and establishment kept for her—she had her carriage and her servants ; her health was matter of inquiry in the immediate neighbourhood, and her improvements seemed to set the country in motion : she was the idol of the villagers, she was flattered by her teachers, and every thing gave her to understand, that some great conclusion awaited these preparatory premises. She was not urged to do right on the motives or in the terms that her books of instruction, or what she heard accidentally, informed her were the usual means of obtaining the obedience of children : there seemed a moral code made on purpose for her ; and the injudicious contrast occasionally drawn between her ladyship and those beneath her, completed the error of natural pride.

On the then newly-divulged principle of press-

ing the passions into the service of virtue, in untamed children, instead of checking them, which Mrs. Parr had first caught as a favourite doctrine very well suiting her purpose, she set herself to turn this natural pride in her young charge, ere yet it had received its due correction, to a profitable purpose. In vain did the vicar argue against the doctrine, as soon as she brought it to him; in vain did he tell her, that it was, even at best, offering to the Deity that which had been polluted by sacrifice to idols: in vain did he, from the pulpit, declare that our headlong passions ought not to be confounded with our reasonable affections—that the former were to be curbed, the latter directed, and that our Christian virtues must stand on their own simple basis, the sense of duty, not on any pedestals from which the instigators to evil had been dismounted. It was all to no purpose; Mrs. Parr had got the melodious axiom into her head, and it was never out of it; she therefore desisted from all opposition to Lady Heraline's pride of heart, and contented herself with the persuasion that she could direct it at pleasure. The consequence was, the stamping on the character of Lady Heraline Beltravers for life, if it did not meet its due corrective, a most erroneous moral sense, which depriving her of much of the pleasure of doing well, made her rectitude of opinion and con-

duct, except as far as instinctive feeling went, depend entirely on the disdain of doing ill, and left her perceptions of good and evil too much to her own judgment.

The tenth birthday now arrived, and the earl was beginning to perceive a necessity of further exertion, when an accident, not so agreeable in itself, as in its first consequences, opened a new vista in his speculations.

His comfort in his town-house had been, on a sudden, diminished by improvements made in that to which it adjoined, and the room in which he passed his mornings, became untenable from smoke. A smoky chimney calls forth as much quackery as any disease incident to the human frame; and a friend recommending as a physician of peculiar ability in such a case, a very adroit swivel-headed Frenchman, the evil was presently removed, if not cured, by the manœuvre which has saved many an army and fleet—a diversion: the earl's breakfast-room was restored to its natural atmosphere, only at the expense of a good collection of pictures in the next; but into this room he never ventured till summer, and he did not then observe the increased mellowness of tints or the ripening redness of his gilt frames.

Encouraged by success and applause, Monsieur de Quinte, the chimney-genius, extended his re-

spectful assiduities to other improvements of his lordship's comfort; and flying gouts having now embodied themselves into decided fits, every thing was acceptable that could stand in the stead of hands and feet. At the time too, when Monsieur's lively talents and insinuating manners presented themselves for acceptance, the earl was thinking of a chaplain in his house, as the break-water against the evils of solitude, when he should happen to outstay in town the whole rota of his table.

There were inconveniences attached to this proposed appendage, which of course presented De Quinte to recollection as a 'better thing;' but Pride made a momentary halt, and bade the peer pause on such an association. Expediency, in reply suggested, that patronage was not an equalization, and that where the distance was so great, there was not so much danger of compromising rank as in a nearer affinity. Contending principles of action were reconciled by a middle course, which held the inferior party in subjection; and De Quinte, at first *ordered* to dine at distant times, and then *sent for* occasionally, at last fell into the convenient form of calling every morning to know how he could be useful.

Whatever the earl's *expediencies* and *admissibilities*, he had sometimes a chance-guest to whom such a personage was not produceable; therefore

the matter was at first precarious, and De Quinte was sent to the *restaurateur* occasionally, when he had flattered himself with better things, or at least things on better terms; but, by degrees, that tendency to supineness for which the necessities of life are not an adequate counteraction, and the superior ease of ordering Monsieur to be admitted, when compared with the trouble of manœuvring for company or being agreeable, settled into daily habit that which had heretofore left the *veto* with his lordship: by degrees other friends were dropt; and De Quinte's anecdotes and attentions, his unshackled principles and subserviency, backgammon and piquet, answered all the purposes of diurnal variety.

What is handy is always acceptable, and relinquished with reluctance. Autumn came, and the month's residence in Devonshire.—De Quinte was quite at leisure to attend 'milord' to his chateau, and thither he accompanied him in his travelling carriage. It mattered not, that the valet whom this intrusion had jostled out, gave warning, or that the butler protested against a French spy: their resignations were accepted: their places were soon filled without a movement on the part of their employer, and novelties were struck out from the igniting brain of the Frenchman,

some of which not a little resembled the cure of the smoky chimney.

So great was the improvement of Lord Lynford's means of enjoying life produced by this new connexion—so much was his mind relieved from its most oppressive cares by the aid of this 'clever fellow,'—nay, so much was his health benefited by this said clever fellow's nice administration of palatable medicine, which, if it did not cure, assuaged, and if it did harm, did it agreeably, that it was impossible for gratitude to be silent; but the earl, perhaps, carried his expressions of obligations rather too far, when he made them in the hearing of his people, and disadvantageously compared every thing done for him by them, with the performances of Monsieur—it was a measure not calculated to make the situation of his favourite easier—but who can set bounds to the extravagance of the needy, or to the lavish generosity of the selfish?

The appellations, of 'factotum, right hand,' and 'my every thing,' used in speaking the praises of the Frenchman, having a little touched the sensitive point in the old steward's perceptions, De Quinte had only to give the least possible jog to his employer's pride, to see a good servant fairly out; and by offering to supply the vacancy till

some one fitter could be found, he secured to himself power, patronage, and emolument.

Still, however, there was one department in which he did not dare even to lament his incapability to be useful.—But he had seen enough to teach him the non-necessity of his own exertions, and that he had only to wait patiently.—A very short trial was given to his patience, when, on the departure from Devonshire, and some little question arising about the establishment of the Lady Heraline, whether it were more fit to leave her another year at St. Emeril's, or to give her now the advantages of London, the earl, to whom all trouble was by disuse becoming every day more troublesome, expressed a hearty unqualified wish to De Quinte, that he would find a wife just as clever as himself; that he and she might take the superintendence of the young 'baroness in potentiâ.'

The hint sufficed: the lady was found, presented for acceptance, and accepted. That a rude thing might not be done to Mrs. Parr, she was summoned to town with her *élève*, and having been given to understand that she had her option of resigning her charge, or of contenting herself with the custody of the person only, from which the new ministry very wisely had degraded

Mademoiselle Annette down to the rank of mere dresser, she begged a few hours to consider, and then with the traces of conflict in her countenance, and the colouring of tears in her eyes, she professed herself disposed to prefer the terms of toleration to the unprofitable liberty offered her.

CHAPTER III.

A SCHEME must have been very imperfectly laid, if it had failed its contrivers, when the party practised on so kindly lent his own assistance : this, which was now maturing, was far too ably manufactured to be liable to common accidents. The ease even of Mrs. Parr, contemned as were her powers, was consulted or connived at, for the present : nothing went amiss ; and just when the young lady's mind became most capable of impressions that were to form it to virtuous excellence or vicious error, Monsieur De Quinte stood ready to stamp it with a cold selfishness, and his wife to varnish it with artificial cunning. But it was the high-day of novel interest excited in Lord Lynford's mind ; and with the relish of an infant for a new toy, he now set his heart on having a daughter from whom he might derive green honours. The idea brought youth and spirits with it, and instruction poured daily on his own mind by the developements of his daughter's tutor. His lordship had not been ignorantly educated : he had only possessed no power of application, and had taken up a consoling contempt for those

who had it, and for the subjects on which it might be exerted.—Something indeed might be said in excuse for him, of the change in modes of thinking and speaking, which have sent the modern learned again to school. In advancing with, or perhaps following, the footsteps of the pupil, he felt himself much further behind the fashion than in his personal costume; and alarmed at this conviction, he took the readiest way to keep up in his pace, by resort to such summaries as his Mentor recommended; till, either finding cause to doubt his own powers of tenacity, or distracted with the instability of systems perpetually giving way to successors as mutable as themselves, he conducted himself with the discretion of an old-fashioned dancer, and sate down, content with surveying the intricacies of a figure that defied his comprehension.

The situation in which the new tutors found their pupil, was not at all discouraging to their endeavours: that pride and haughtiness of spirit had been nourished by the perception of superiority in every point, was not appalling to persons who never questioned their own abilities, nor had been taught, by want of success, to doubt their power to ensure it; and that injunctions to independence, very ill understood even by the teacher, had been received as encouragements to dispute all autho-

rity, could not disconcert those who had other manacles than precepts ready to put on their captive. De Quinte himself, well gifted by nature, had risen by his address from a very low class of the emulous; and his wife, an Italian by birth, had been reared in all departments of the French opera, in which a natural genius for music, dancing, and painting, with great liveliness of talents, and the most finished graces of a plain person, could be made useful—she was a prize and a fortune to a schemer: she saw her interest in the matrimonial overture made to her: she had no heart to offer—none to break—she risked nothing by the attempt to quarter herself on that to which continental emigrants seem to have little repugnance, the comforts of an English home. The talents of her husband were the indenture to her own: to shorten his own labour in acquiring, he had learned or formed the shortest methods of communicating knowledge: he had extended his pursuits not by the feeling of his taste, but by that of his necessities; and if it might with greater truth be said of him, that he almost *understood* every thing, than that he understood *almost* every thing, still his imperfection was so much less imperfect, than that of many teachers possessing far less range of acquirement, that it would have been very fastidious to have found fault, even if fault was to be found.

From the new patron, it was soon evident there was nothing connected with discernment to fear.

A necessary preamble to the first act of improvement, was to convince the Lady Heraline, that under her previous teacher she had learned nothing; but to do this so as not to incense a spirit of fiery zeal, equally ardent, whether exerted for or against, and which on every trial showed alarming symptoms of just discrimination, required management. Injustice towards Mrs. Parr, unless inflicted by the young lady herself, would have made Lady Heraline her strenuous defender.—Credit given to her, might have lengthened the endurance of her. There was a safe and middle way; ‘ she had done her best, but she was English—and therefore—— ’ the remainder of the speech cannot be represented by the pen or the pencil—it was a snap with Monsieur de Quinte’s finger and thumb, such as none but French or Italian joints can give—and which, in its gesture and sound, serves to set at the very lowest, whatever it happens to treat of.

At the first interview, the person of Lady Heraline had been surveyed by Madame, with the eye of an improver of ill laid-out grounds, or an architect set to give lightness and grace to a building of Vanbrugh’s—but there was no room for despair or contempt. She was a very fine, handsome,

tall, slender, promising girl of nearly eleven years of age, with a fine complexion, dark eyes and hair; and though the varying expression of her countenance could speak languages the most opposite, yet there was no reason to conclude that the least agreeable was that most natural to it. Madame's report to her husband said all that could be said: '*Ma foi! on peut faire de cette demoiselle; tout ce qu'on voudroit faire, mais, mon ami, on peut entrevoir dans son caractère quelque chose de si épineux, qu'il faut bien prendre garde à ses propres doigts en le touchant.*'—It was very true that any thing might be made of her; but that there was great danger of pricked fingers in attempting to touch her.

The improvement in Lady Heraline's juvenile pleasures, would of itself have reconciled her to some unpleasant changes; but she had none to endure: she was treated with the same distinction as at St. Emeril's. In London, amusements were sought for her, and associations formed, which rendered the attainment of some of her accomplishments an affair of relaxation. Her tutors made her work hard, and exacted much from her powers of exertion; but they had their facilitating plans which might have made the quantity of acquirement superior to the quality of it, if her lofty spirit had not set itself sometimes to pose her in-

structors, and insisted on their diving to the bottom of the well, from which they were pumping up knowledge for her by mechanical combinations. 'The 'how?' the 'why?' the incredulous acceptance of a dogma, sometimes carried inquiry to a point that irritated De Quinte's feelings, and made the angularity of his features still sharper than nature's chisel had left them : but resistance on his part only increased stiffness on that of his pupil, and exposed him to increased persecution. There was no authority to which Lady Heraline had been accustomed to bend; and on the present plan, the instinctive feeling of compassion, which would make her stop short of worrying Mrs. Parr beyond *all* endurance, was not to be called into action : she was therefore unmercifully just to herself, and not unfrequently sent De Quinte to bed with vapours and a violent head-ach. Mrs. Parr was not to be interested in the abatement of this nuisance : she rather enjoyed any annoyance to the new ministry, who every day revenged themselves on her unconciliating looks and side-speeches, by removing a stone from the foundation of her credit with the earl.

At length, not merely the non-necessity of Mrs. Parr's lieutenancy, but the impediment it formed to the pupil's progress, was made evident to Lord Lynford's observation, without a word of opposi-

tion uttered, or her name being used ; and on the return to St. Emeril's, Lady Heraline was allowed to hear accidentally of the plan for her first preceptor's dismissal. The course of events was well foreseen : it was known that at the next displeasure against Mrs. Parr, Lady Heraline would vent her wrath by reporting the offensive intelligence. No restriction had been put on her tongue ; and, calculating on previous occurrences, opportunity could not long be wanting.

The tone and manner in which this revenge was taken, showed the childish hope that it would give pain ; but Mrs. Parr's pride had been already brought nearer to the surface by repeated indignities, which she had not dared to resent ; and it stood in the place of good sense, when it prompted her to disappoint the unworthy project. She replied by acknowledging, though not submissively, ' that it was high time her ladyship should be taken out of *her* hands,' and ' that she should feel very much relieved when she was dismissed from a situation which she believed had been made purposely uncomfortable to her, in the hope of inducing her to resign.' Lady Heraline was dismayed—the last sentence made her suspect Mrs. Parr might have over-reached her, by assuming a character below that of the sagacity which belonged to her ; and the former one in-

flicted on her the mortification of seeing herself ‘lightly esteemed.’—She approached Mrs. Parr with a crest much lowered, and seemed to hope that contact would subdue this extraordinary departure from her usual habit of endurance. The tears stood on her long eyelashes, as if waiting to be allowed to fall—but Mrs. Parr’s feeling of injurious treatment held good.—There was still the resource of speech; and to this Lady Heraline had seldom condescended in vain: her lips quivered, and she said, ‘And are you not sorry to give me up?’—‘Not at all,’ said Mrs. Parr firmly—but at the next moment, the thought of that alternative which was now imposed on her, occurring, her self-pity did what her pupil’s solicitation might not have done:—she burst into tears, bewailed herself, clasped Lady Heraline in her arms, and gave her a most profitable insight into her own power. The young lady did not join in weeping—she stiffened her spirit—recanted her weakness—and contemning more than ever, the mind that ought to have formed hers, she departed no more from her supporting haughtiness.

It was becoming necessary to prove to the earl, by redoubled assiduity, that, in dismissing Goody Parr, as she now affected to call her ejected *gouvernante*, an obstacle to improvement had been removed; and consequently new attainments were

proposed, and new facilitations invented, for producing a striking effect, against the time of visiting St. Emeril's, whither Mrs. Parr had returned. To sweeten and requite these dancing-dog and learned-pig inflictions, indulgences were allowed by the teachers, and means resorted to, which, while they showed her the price at which she was bribed, tended to sap the foundation of a dignified morality, and to introduce a wild inconsistency into her character. She was taught to enjoy the secrecy of gratifications—she was put in the way to act clandestinely by her father, and, like the Spartan boys, was blamed when she marred her deceptions by simplicity. Made now the companion of Lord Lynford, to all the various points from which he fought old age and sickness, every place held out new attractions. Wherever a raffle was announced, in spite of her well-implanted abhorrence of mean covetousness, the name of Lady Heraline Beltravers was to be found; and, though hitherto little solicitous for the decoration of her person, she was seen decked in foreign finery.—The earl's experience, probably, in the female world, had given him an abhorrence of the resort to a circulating library for amusement; consequently, though not without apology for interference, he strictly forbade his daughter's indulging any taste for such lore. It was, therefore,

one of the basest acts of her instructors, secretly to ridicule his formality—to extol certain French writers, whose works were easily to be found in these repositories, and to connive at the intercourse. They had no view to corrupt the principles of Lady Heraline, in making her unmanageable: of this they were innocent, and they well knew, that, to guide her, they must use a bit and a rein, to the coercion of which she must remain sensible—their highest aim was to render themselves necessary to her, and her subservient to them; and for both these purposes, nothing was more requisite than a mutual confidence, which they never could wish, and she never must dare to betray.

Devonshire and St. Emeril's had now lost their influence over the movements of Lord Lynford: he had always with him that which alone had attracted him so far from London, and he suffered two years to elapse before he visited his estates there. In the mean time, the Lady Heraline was making all possible improvement under her teachers, and forming juvenile connexions which, except that she was always attended by Madame De Quinte, amounted almost to an introduction to the world, of which she was to prove so capital a luminary. All that reserve which is so commendable in prudent mothers, who feel it

injustice to bring forward their daughters till they are in some degree exempt from the danger of doing themselves harm, was no part of the training of a young female circumstanced as was Lady Heraline.—Before other girls had been shown the opera-house, she had her box there : the earl could not venture to accompany her ; nor could he often spare De Quinte for longer time than to hand her into her box ; but there were ladies in abundance, who under such circumstances would offer themselves as chaperons ; and of Lady Drumcannon his next-door neighbour, who loved every thing that she could not afford, he was always sure, when he wanted Lady Heraline attended. Madame De Quinte was never excluded : she held her station as lady of honour ; and in order to obtain for herself a reflex credit by magnifying the idol she served, her eye waited a signal from her pupil, before she presumed to sit in her presence when in public. One remark this profundity of obeisance drew forth from by-standers—‘ that if Lady Heraline Beltravers ever by chance should become *royal*, she certainly would have little to learn of what was due to herself.’

At the expiration however of these two years, it was necessary for Lord Lynford to visit St. Emeril’s, and Lady Heraline, ‘ nothing loth,’ prepared to attend him. That love of the country,

which it is so delightful to see in young minds, more than counterbalancing the artificial pleasures of the metropolis, still possessed her; and instead of shrinking from a meeting with 'Goody Parr,' under the recollection of things better forgotten, she felt pride and exultation in exhibiting her improved self, and showing her first instructor how much had been done, which *she* had been found unable to do.

There was no such hostility against the poor woman as to make it a subject of resentment, to see her comfortably housed in the family of the vicar of St. Emeril's, and at the head of his small establishment. Her having found a home might give pleasure to those sensible to her humble pretensions, but could excite envy in no one so exalted as Madame De Quinte, whose expressions and accompanying gestures, though restrained while her empire was in any degree shared, were significant enough, at least to keep the door shut against any one whom she disliked.

Lady Heraline's joy at returning to St. Emeril's did her credit: the liberty to which it restored her, was natural to her, and had lost none of its charms when compared with the incessant town-life her father contrived to lead, wherever he went. Under the eye of the multitude, however gratified by gaze and admiration, she had lived in shackles.

—What it was fit for her to do—what would be expected from her—and what the style of her education required, were the obligations to which she was uniformly compelled to submit.—She had lived, at best, in bad imitations of rural scenery ; for that of a villa with a field and a shrubbery-walk, was too much abstracted from his habitual demand of population, to please the earl : the spacious end-house of some new-named sea-row—the centre-house of some new deputy-London square, different numbers of doors in Places, Crescents, and Circuses, were as great contrasts as he could admit into his monotonous life, of which every passing year struck off some space of vibration.

In returning to St. Emeril's, therefore, his lordship seemed to lose all that his daughter gained in liberty. She was eager to make the most of her enjoyments ; and as the extent of ground which she had to revisit, was considerable, every moment of relaxation from tuition, was fully employed in the innocent and almost laudable indulgence of sweet recollection and infant intercourse.

To render her education, while in the country, amusing as well as instructive, nothing was spared. She was consulted and indulged, as few other children can be, and fewer still ought to be. She

was furnished with all the means of acquiring knowledge that French writers had offered, or a French head could contrive. She had her heroic series—her philosophical series—her historical and poetic series of transmitted resemblances and imputed names.—She had a superb library of quartos and royal octavos, when *misses* have only juvenile publications in eighteens and twenty-fours.—She had her botanic garden, when other children were setting peas round rose-bushes, and were watching anxiously the coming up of mustard and cresses. As she proceeded, she had her mineralogical cabinet, to which additions were presented by those who had similar tastes, and perhaps not just the same views—she had her fossils and shells of high beauty and great rarity, all arranged systematically.—She had her little laboratory of chemical surprises, and her pneumatic apparatus of small effects. Nothing came in fashion, or was foreseen as probably becoming so, to which her mind was not *twitched* rather than directed; and she was learning with some success to read that *ne plus ultra* of Gallic lore ‘Salluste,’ and getting by heart the tender sentiments of Ovid’s Epistles.—She wrote billets of French phrase in Latin; and having acquired the knowledge of the Greek character, was proceeding much in the same way with that.

Little of this plan of proceeding was to be decried. As far as the system went, it was all good. The highway is the same to every one; and she was made well acquainted with that which she was treading. Years probably must elapse before the question occurs, 'Have I proceeded no farther?'

Mrs. Parr had called, with her humble inquiries, which were received in a way that said, 'You need not trouble yourself again.' The vicar had paid his respectful visit of congratulation, and had shaken his head in quitting the house, as if he had seen his patron's daughter far gone in some threatening disease. The young lady including in the number of agreeable associations, the church, had made her *début* there in a style that did not indicate improvement in the knowledge of her duty. The neighbouring and not-neighbouring families had paid attentions—the middle class had worshipped at due distance—the poor had found her rather generous than charitable—the young women had watched her fashions, and the old had abused them; and Lady Heraline, now settled again in her native home, and not insensible to the prospect of one day, and perhaps a day not far off, calling it her own, and admitting some one to share it, was not appalled by the warning that she must spend three autumn-months there.

CHAPTER IV.

BUT into even this seclusion did evil intrude ; and the earl found that, however closely his increasing infirmities had made him furl his sails, they would catch some stormy blasts to disturb him. He had many years before, bestowed the vicarage of St. Emeril's, as has been said, on his college-tutor, who by chance happened to be eminently a good man. Mr. Meryon, now advancing in years, could feel little respect for his patron ; but gratitude supplied its place, and there remained in his mind a feeling of interest, and, in some degree, of compassion, which he had imbibed in the time of his original connexion with the earl, interest which his ill requital of his cares as a scholar could not extinguish, and compassion which his progress in *real* wisdom had never enabled him to dismiss.

During the childhood of the Lady Heraline, Mr. Meryon's assistance had been, as far as her limited powers and proportionate obstinacy would permit, useful to Mrs. Parr ; but even *she* would not suffer any intrusion that could tend to divide her identity : she would learn to teach ; but unless under the earl's precise election, would allow no one to take the chair which she filled ;

and Lord Lynford's attachment to the church was not great enough to make him refer any concern of his daughter's to a spiritual guidance. Mr. Meryon had therefore kept his due distance, and had been content to see the little lady take her seat in her family-gallery once a week. In his deportment he was studiously respectful and conciliating ; and under the influence of that best charity which makes hope patient and anxiety forbearing, he waited the event of increasing years and increasing knowledge, wishing and praying that a lovely girl, so richly endowed with all Heaven's best blessings, might become the wise dispenser of the riches intrusted to her, and herself a blessing to those whom he taught to include her in their prayers for good to themselves.

In Lord Lynford's return at this time to his possessions, there were, however, circumstances which, in Mr. Meryon's conscientious judgment, called on him to risque something of his own comfort, in preference to a supine acquiescence in a plan productive of evil to others. The Lady Heraline came to church every Sunday morning; and had he been admitted to intimacy, he must have been gratified in witnessing the resolution she showed in persisting in this habit. The religious profession of those who guided her, if they had any, not admitting of their willingly accompanying

her, and the earl making no point of their overcoming their scruples, she came alone ; and nothing in her behaviour indicated interest in what she came for. In short, she set an example, rather bad than edifying ; and Mr. Meryon could not but refer this to the utter ignorance in which she must be rearing, under her present tutors. He had baptized her : he wished to see her in due time confirmed ; and on this point he ventured to speak to Lord Lynford, at the same time offering his professional services, and excusing his intrusion by the fear that, educated under persons not Protestants, a very essential part of education might not be well attended to. Mr. Meryon might have foreseen the consequences of such an interference—he did see them, and braved them—he had not, by intemperate language or any failure in respect, risked his own situation in his patron's favour, but he thought there was something more loudly claiming his exertions :—the yearly buck he knew might be forfeited—dues might be less munificently paid—the earl had great powers of reduction and annoyance, but Lady Heraline was of more consequence than ease or emolument.

One conference on this business decided the point. After it, there was no more communication between St. Emeril's Court and the vicarage-house. The earl considered himself as attacked

in his rank, his understanding, his parental care, and his private opinion. Monsieur and Madame turned to ridicule the cause of this estrangement, and declared their appropriate feeling of the justice of the vicar's punishment; and the Lady Heraline, though but half satisfied, not very sorry to have a strong reason for being shy towards Mrs. Parr, whom she dared not love, and could not hate, acquiesced in her father's decision. Mr. Meryon, to satisfy his sense of right, persisted in calling at the great house, till the denial of the earl carried with it something little short of a desire to forbear : he then wrote, but received no answer. It was easy for Lord Lynford to loll a little backward in his carriage, if he encountered the vicar on the highway; and the young lady, if she crossed in her equestrian airings on his path, reined in her horse, and pulled up her pretty head with a very good representation of defiance. 'Never mind,' said Mr. Meryon to Mrs. Parr, when on some new testifications of pointed ill-humour, she was ready to cry;—'never mind, Mrs. Parr—do your duty; I will do mine, and depend on it, things will come right at last—I know nothing so pitiable as the blind obstinacy of people who insist on their right of doing wrong, to their own detriment. If revenge were admissible into the mind of a responsible being, we need only turn our coats, and

say "All's well;" but were I capable of this in any instance, I could not admit it where this family are concerned.—This poor intoxicated child will have many a painful feeling to endure at some period or other of her life, if she is to be educated entirely by these people. From what I know of her, there is too much intellectual light in her mind, to admit of her erring without being sensible of it, or of her persisting in it to the end, without the conviction of her reason, and all the consequent bitterness of repentance. The natural good in her, will not always suffer her to be unfeeling and haughty, without calling her to account for it. All this I would endeavour to prevent, but I know I shall not be suffered to attempt it. She has had the first principles of religion imprinted on her memory: they will not always permit her, with the hardened indifference of an untaught mind, to affront her Maker as she does now, in her treatment of me his minister. While she is under the tutelage of these people, I can have no hope, and she claims all my pity; but I cannot forbear saying, the sooner they are dismissed, the better for her.'

There were, of necessity, some occasional transactions of business between the offended peer and the forbearing parson, which required intercourse, though they did not meet; and of these

opportunities, the De Quintes never failed to avail themselves, to fan the flame of waning resentment, if they saw cause to fear that Lord Lynford's consultation of his own ease, made it troublesome to him to be angry, or suspected that his daughter was growing weary of acting ill without sufficient provocation. She would sometimes presume to think, that Mr. Meryon looked very good-natured when she passed him;—some good deed—some testimonial to his disinterested regard for his flock—some praise from those whom he had relieved—some proof of his sagacity—or some powerful exertion of his authority and influence, would find its way occasionally to her; and Mademoiselle Annette having a few intimacies in the neighbourhood, through the medium of a sea-faring young man who spoke her own language, and whose sister took pains to improve her broken English, could annoy those who controlled her, by occasionally reporting well of him whom they regarded as their enemy. Annette therefore not only served to moderate this foolish, and worse than foolish, hostility; but, without intending any thing half so good, she kept alive in her young lady a sort of clandestine affection for the vicar.

Could the De Quintes have prevailed on Lord Lynford to forbid his daughter's weekly attendance at church, they would have gained a great advan-

tage; but his lordship had picked up the opinion of some others equally wise, that Christianity, fable as it all was, and below the attention of men, was an excellent mean for the government of the weaker sex. He used an unanswerable argument in speaking on the subject; he said, ‘For instance, I should be exceedingly sorry, very sorry indeed, to have a bit and a curb-rein pulling at my chaps, but I have not the least objection to giving one to my horse—ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha! ha, ha, ha!’—Who could answer this?—It was the unanswerable question, and the happy figure which decided the query, whether his daughter should have any religion or none?—Her attendance at church therefore proceeded as matter of course; and, if the habit added to this mechanical regularity, had not been sufficient impulse, it would have been found in the pleasure of being the principal object and the gazing-stock of a little west-country village.

In these attendances, there would occur sometimes a sentence that would touch some feeling: had it borne the smallest appearance of intentional reproof, it would have been resented and useless; but, for what was merely read, Mr. Meryon was not responsible, and no such zeal could be imputed to the temperate and cordial persuasion to righteousness, which he delivered from the pulpit.

Still there was an appeal from his opinion ; and no pains were spared, as opportunity was offered, to depreciate his authority : but when what he said was corroborated by the Bible, which Mrs. Parr with pride and confidence had taught her to respect, nothing that Monsieur or Madame had to say, could effect the smallest change in her straight-forward conclusions ; and she was ready, when provoked, to repeat the stigmatizing terms under which she heard their *ignorance*, as it was called, blamed.

Fortunately for the Lady Heraline, neither of the De Quintes had any religion. They were nominally Catholics, but without any characteristic of opinion or practice that could entitle them to the appellation, or even to that of Christians. The man professed nothing beyond the religion of nature, and talked of the fields as his temple, and animals as his preachers ;—while his wife, though perpetually apostrophizing the Deity, referred all things to her heart, with a distortion of grimace which the young lady would sometimes imitate and ridicule when alone with Annette.

Systems, such as these, could not easily supersede in an intelligent forward girl's mind, the satisfying truths of revelation. A law laid down—a law broken—terms of forgiveness—promises of reward and threats of punishment, especially when supported

by interesting narrative, much more easily gained admission into an unprejudiced belief, than the circuitous inconsistencies of the substitutions of the one, or the stage-trick of the other. Her present instructors might have obtained credit for the doctrine of transubstantiation, and induced her to pay her adorations to a Madonna of Carlo Dolce; but for what they had to bring forward, they obtained no toleration. Limited as had been her religious instruction, and unrecommended as it came from the lips of Goody Parr, the simple facts on which our belief is founded, had made their way to Lady Heraline's head and heart, however imperfectly she was taught to apply its precepts; and it would have been a less difficult task to persuade her that two and two do *not* make four, than that the daily chapter which she had, for five years of her life, read aloud to Goody Parr, and heard occasionally at church, contained any thing that was not true. The inference of moral obligation remained still to be drawn; and that it had not been already drawn, was much to be deplored. Such a belief might be denominated prejudice, by those not conversant with the power even an infant-intellect has of appreciating truth:—if it *be* prejudice, and not rather the provision laid up by wisdom and mercy for future use, it is, and ever will be found,

a prejudice of inestimable value, when it remains the only resource of late conviction.

In the life of distinguished personages, the season of childhood is very short : the manners are brought forward ; and the mind does not always choose to remain behind. Lady Heraline's ideas were not those of a girl of her age in common life : nor were her estimations of good and evil, right and wrong, those of the vulgar. Pride, under both the administrations that had served her, and no less under the earl's fostering care, furnished the major part of her feelings : to be exalted, rich, and greatly married, were her natural intentions ; and these not allowing any great range of choice, were points soon settled, though not dismissed. What should be the good uses made of these intentions, when converted into performances, had not yet entered her thoughts.

From Monsieur De Quinte's process in some branches of her education, she had acquired a disposition to question and to doubt, which, but for the effect of habit on her mind, might have led to bad consequences ; but fortunately the pride and haughtiness inculcated on her, inclined her to exercise this scepticism on those by whom it would be most felt ; and she often put her tutor's patience to a trial, and drove him to sad subterfuges, by her starts from the subject before her, and by scarcely-

connected questions. When not satisfied with the answers she obtained, she would resort to her father, who, recollecting his own plan of the bit and the curb for females, gave her the solution of any difficulty, in the way best according with his scheme, which scheme having a far better foundation in itself than that he assigned it, answered the best purposes, and rendered Lady Heraline Beltravers a much better theologian than her tutor. Two simple questions which she had asked the earl, on returning one Sunday from church, had brought out answers that rooted her in her prejudices.—The one was, in sum and substance, whether there had not been persons who had repented their having no sense of religion.—‘Certainly,’ the earl replied; adding, that ‘it was very necessary for all young ladies who wished to conduct themselves properly, to read their Bible.’—The other was, whether any body, when going to die, ever repented having given credit to the Scriptures.—It was as convenient as it was true, to give a hearty negative to this question; and the querist was satisfied.

CHAPTER V.

LADY Heraline might have remained contentedly at St. Emeril's, even longer than it suited her father to continue there ; but De Quinte and his wife sighed for a return to London ; and to obtain their wish, the shortest method was to prompt her ladyship to think herself weary ; and at the expiration of the time vaguely mentioned as that of the residence in Devonshire, to hint to her the necessity of doing something to terminate it. The earl's well-known pride of indulgence to his daughter, was encouraging, and there was little hesitation in her manifesting her wishes. They would have been laws to him, had not a more strenuous coercion stepped in between her power and his submission, in the shape of a paralytic seizure, while he was giving his orders for a removal to Bath in the way to London.

It was the first violent check the impatience of the Lady Heraline had experienced, though demands were daily made on her acquiescence, and her life perhaps, studiously spoiled as she was, had not been productive of half the real pleasure enjoyed by one of a large family of children,

in a less important rank of society. Unacquainted with the nature of any disease, and not greatly alarmed by an enemy that approached with a foot-step so silent, she, by chance or through peevishness, hit upon a true conclusion when she considered herself as now doomed to a tedious waiting.

On the earl's first attack, he had called for her ; and his life was at the time considered as in danger ; but he rallied ; and now came a season of protracted trial, for which nothing had prepared her : he would not suffer her to be out of his sight, and she was a prisoner in a darkened room, compelled to listen to the unintelligible wailings and imperfect self-commiserations of a surprised captive. She was not permitted to employ herself : every rustling of paper, every motion of her hand, disturbed his irritated nerves.—‘What’s o’clock?’—‘When will my dinner come?’ ‘Where’s De Quinte?’ ‘Is my jelly made?’ ‘When am I to take my draught?’ were the questions she had to construe and to answer ; and the orders issued corresponded with them. Her replies and obediences were to be as little disquieting as possible ; and had it not been for the vent allowed her feelings when she could escape for a few minutes, she might have suspected that the earl’s life and hers were twined into one thread, and that she was to die

with him. Hints in that language best calculated to hint, had been thrown out, that as the father's lamp burnt more and more dim, the daughter's would burn more bright ; but she was dejected and impatient beyond the power of catching at this comfort.

The worst, the really pitiable part of her endurance, did not, however, last to extremity. The earl rose from his bed ; and from his couch in his chamber, was moved to that in his dressing-room. De Quinte was admitted to supply the place of the Lady Heraline while she took exercise ; and by degrees, save and except the reading the newspaper, which the foreign accent of Monsieur and Madame would not admit of their undertaking, they judiciously contrived to exonerate their noble charge from most of the irksome duties imposed on her.—Still she could not be insensible to the yoke and the bridle.

And even when restored in some measure to the usual routine of her life at St. Emeril's Court, the recollection of recent suffering was too strong, and the fear of repetition too just, to allow her to be herself again. That she had wished herself away from the place where she was, rendered that place extremely unpleasant when she could not get away.—Every thing had lost its power of being

agreeable ; and she was offended, if reminded that she once had been fond of St. Emeril's.

Not caring to ask what chance she stood of emancipation in one way, she made use of the converse proposition to satisfy herself, and expressed anxiety to know the probable time of her father's *convalescence*. The answers given her by his medical council, were not very well calculated to encourage her : they told her that the earl was in that state of medium-existence, equally removed from hope of amendment or prospect of termination : ' his lordship, though yet unable to use the hand or foot of one side, might recover this lost power, or, even without their services, reach a still farther advanced period of old age—there was no existing reason why he should not live to ninety—longevity ran much in families ; and his ancestry had been conspicuous in that particular privilege—at the same time, nothing could,' they confessed, ' be more precarious than a life so wounded—he might have another, and a fatal, seizure at any moment : his ease, quiet, and inclination, must be uniformly consulted : all vicissitudes must be avoided. Bath might be of service to him ; but he seemed to have too great a reluctance to be seen in his crippled state, to admit of urging it on his adoption.'—His daughter burst into tears of despondence and vexation ; and, without intending to

mislead, got great credit for her affectionate feelings.

With the De Quintes she had no scruples. They whispered, and she echoed expressions of dismay.—His lordship was not the easier to please or serve, for his late shake of nerves; and the complaints of these his proximate ministers, went little short of predicting that he would live to plague and bury his daughter and half his household.

Words such as these found their way to the Lady Heraline's most apprehensive feelings; and her tutors soon saw that the petulance of their tongues had converted her ladyship into a refractory idol, requiring no less direction and observance in her way, than the earl did in his. They must now seek to please her whom they had hitherto only sought to govern, or some violent proceeding, on her part, might betray their methods, introduce a new administration, and turn them out, unrequited for their labours. Her ladyship had, under the secret prompting of Annette, clandestinely sounded her father on the probable benefit of Bath, but had been forbidden to mention the subject again. She had cast about, with a subtilty superinduced by discontent, for association and volunteered accompaniment; and a resolution 'to endure all this no longer,' had escaped her lips.—For the time, she was again pacified by the vehement undertakings

of De Quinte for some undefined alteration : he gave her to understand that he knew more and saw more than he revealed ; and another half-year was passed without entitling the period of its conclusion to pronounce either her situation, or that on which hers depended, materially better. Lord Lynford could take his airings, was dressed as heretofore, could read his newspapers himself, and audit his accounts ; therefore his privations were not great : he could not indeed bear to be seen by visitors ; and the mention of them consequently made him peevish ; but the renunciation this demanded from Lady Heraline was not very grievous to her, as she had little intimacy of disposition about her, and this was a season when the country was very much deserted. She said and she felt, that if she was to be immured, she would rather not see or hear those who had it in their power to remind her of her misery.

The habit of going to church still adhered to her ; and whatever attempts she had made to reason herself out of this formality, for which she was very much at a loss to find an excuse, did not quite avail. Mr. Meryon continued to do the duty, and the absence of novelty made his sermon an occasional amusement. He had never preached a Petit Carême for her : she could take to herself nothing but what any villager might have dis-

puted with her ; and in the pettish vexation of her mind, she would now and then affect to feel affronted that she was so entirely passed over, as never to hear any thing addressed to her rank of personages. This growing jealousy, perverse as it was, made her, as she listened for entertainment, catch at any sentiment suited to herself:—she discussed it rapidly, and nodded or shook her head, as her profound judgment and sage experience dictated. She was on this quest of regard, when the good old man preached on the relative duties of life, as becoming to us, according to our method of performing them, either pleasant or painful, either hinderances or accelerations to us in our path to a better state of existence. He told his flock—and he told them true—that the cares of this life, fairly met and supported, brought their own reward ; but that to whoever shrunk from them, or sought selfish comfort in the disregard of them, they would be thorns and briers, even when they ceased. He might have said, ‘ Would yon lovely heiress subdue her mind to the trial now appointed her patience—would she say with the anxious alacrity of Samuel at an old man’s bedside, “ Here I am, for thou calledst me ; ”—in short, would she set her heart on her duty now, how would she *not* be repaid in future ?—and without the necessity of correction—without the agonies of self-reproach—without the

degradation of repentance!’—But of all suspicions of such application, Mr. Meryon, too well versed in human chances to play against great odds, kept clear; and the Lady Heraline’s *good sense* and smelling-salts, enabled her to decide anew, as she had often before done, that there was *le grand morale* for the *noblesse*, and *le petit morale* for the *bourgeoisie*.—The De Quintes had said so, and she was, just now, more than usually inclined to believe them infallible.

But it was not by such half-lent attention that the Lady Heraline could learn the importance of her duties, or by her subsequent casuistry disencumber herself of them. Her sins of *ignorance* were few—it was not under want of light, however sparingly diffused over her pampered mind, that she erred—but the light that should have guided her, she contemned and refused, without being able to extinguish it, or to endure it. Under this vexation of spirit, she was every day more vexatious to those under her control; and though her tutors would have spurned the being supposed thus influenced, it was nevertheless true that they looked with anxiety to her smiles, and with fear to her frowns. She had, and they felt it, their destiny in her hands; and it was their interest to be cautious.

A better daughter has sometimes gained less

credit in attendance on an infirm parent than did the heartless Lady Heraline. Under Mademoiselle Annette's comforting, she had given herself a perverse habit of indifference, which made all she did monotonous ; therefore her conduct appeared equable ; and perhaps it was not known distinctly to herself, that she stood completely in awe of the earl ; therefore she had the praise of duty. Nothing was too strong an expression of her harassed feelings out of his hearing ; but in it, she felt subdued by his irritability and suspended on his caprices ; therefore she had self-command. He was perfectly—under De Quinte—master of his own house, and—with not even the intervention of Madame De Quinte—lord over his own daughter.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE was too much now imposed upon the suffering patience of the De Quintes, for even their prudence to endure. The earl, in all his vagaries, which left his prime-minister no certainty of repose by night nor rest by day, must be tolerated; but some expedient must be found to prevent the Lady Heraline's prosecuting a plan of at least temporary emancipation by an absence from home, under the pretence of invitation from her London chaperon, Lady Drummannon, who corresponded with her at all times, and now, under inclosure the soubrette, speaking her commiserating sentiments of her sad confinement, stood ready to second any thing that the sufferer could devise. Lord Drummannon not being a peer of England, was abroad to avoid his creditors: her ladyship was quite at leisure to be franked to any populous quarter of the globe: she hated Madame De Quinte as an obtruded spy, when Lady Heraline was in London: and though she saw the necessity of out-complimenting the foreigners, would have been happy to supplant them, and accept, what she doubted not in that case would have been offered

to her, the feminine half of the guardianship of the Lady Heraline. Enough of this was seen to excite the jealousy of the foreign pair, and to call up their best endeavours to thwart the plan, and keep their charge out of the old lady's hands.

The situation of the De Quintès as man and wife, afforded them facilities which no other could have admitted. They could, in private, arrange their proceedings; and therefore were not tardy in their self-defence. It was agreed, on a minute discussion, that their only chance for out-bidding the old dowager, lay in the resource of interesting *the heart* of Lady Heraline—an undertaking, in her present situation, not very likely to be accomplished by them.

She was indeed advanced in womanhood;—and, in her former juvenile parties for improvement or amusement, had not been wanting in her distinction of the lads who best pleased her eye—the army, as a profession, had her favour—and good style of manners, well-chosen fashions, and even fine eyes and well-set teeth, had not been lost upon her observation; but at present there was not a youth of pretension within reach—and below her rank, all who knew Lady Heraline, were convinced, she would never look. Mr. Meryon took no pupils to give her an option of clandestine melancholy; and a recommendation from persons

who could be described as the De Quintes might be, she could not be supposed to accept. Yet the expedient of having his contriving head half buried in a trunk, when she wanted Monsieur one morning to listen to her in private, answered every purpose.

He had been sent to town on business of importance, and had been but a few hours returned, when the young lady sought him. Seeing him unusually occupied, and, when he raised his head out of the trunk, perceiving his countenance disturbed, she asked what he was doing. The question seemed to increase his disturbance; but she was put off with a promise that, at a more convenient opportunity, she should hear:—the promise was given in a way to make her expect more than she had asked, and she waited with as little patience as her accustomed stock usually furnished, for the hour of revelation.

She was not disappointed; but previous to the disclosure, her expectation had been wrought up to the height by the manner of Madame, who seemed to have caught the disturbance of aspect which Lady Heraline had remarked in De Quinte. Her ladyship made no scruple of noticing this, but receiving for answer from Madame De Quinte, a reference to the promise which she knew Lady Heraline had obtained, she was satisfied, and not a

little pleased with additional hints thrown out of the astonishing story she had to hear.

The canvass thus primed, was ready for the colours to be laid on it by the skilful hand of De Quinte; and well knowing how to interest a female heart like that he had now so long studied, he began by the affectation of a candid disclosure of his own private circumstances. With the then distracted situation of his country, Lady Heraline was well acquainted: he had now to tell her that his friendships and connexions there, had been of the first description, and that it was for some of those to whom he was bound by every tie, that he was now feeling the most distressing anxiety. His dear friend *le Duc de Quelquechose* was dead; his amiable son *le Comte de Quelqu'un* had, at the hazard of his life, and with the abandonment of all his immense property, made his escape to England: he was a lovely charming youth, nineteen years of age, accustomed to all the elegancies of life, and now, in danger of wanting bread. 'That trunk into which she had seen him diving, was the repository of all this youth's remaining possessions—he had intrusted them to his care; and she could not wonder at the feelings excited by the moment.—She should have been in London—she should have seen the agonized note which he had found awaiting his chance-return to Grosvenor Square—

it ought to have been sent express to him—he wished he had it about him—where could it be?—he would show it her when he found it—there was nothing more touching in Voltaire, or in the sensitive Jean Jacques.’

The commentary of foreign gesticulation said all that prudence or modesty forbade the tongue to tell.—It said, ‘I went to him—I comforted him—I gave him all I had—ill as I could spare it—for I have a most grateful excellent heart.’

And verily, incredible as it may seem, the Lady Heraline’s eyes were suffused with tears, under those soft impressions.—But let them not be set down to the account of pure unsophisticated compassion.—Lady Heraline would not have been, at this time, hard-hearted towards any distress that had been presented to her feelings; but she would not have felt as she did now, for any thing but a handsome lad fallen from high estate—there is a very engaging period of youth, when the heart is soon mollified—and there is another period of departed youth, when it is not less disposed to receive impressions—the heart in hope of love, is all tenderness—the heart in despair of love, is all enthusiasm—neither the one state nor the other has the least claim to any thing beyond excuse.

It was not De Quinte’s intention to work on Lady Heraline to the expense of her purse or her

note-case ; but when, in all the grace of sympathy, she proffered a delicate bit of paper with 'Twenty-five' in Gothic characters, he saw instantly many good reasons against declining the boon—and he felt encouraged more and more to enter into the detail of the young count's pretensions.—She was not shy in inquiring, nor in confessing to Annette and Madame the next morning, that her night's rest had been sacrificed to her painful recollections.—The work was done : the experience of a few days showed that the impression did not wear out. She sat patiently to hear the affectionate lamentations of Monsieur and Madame, interrupting them in a way indicating a strong disposition to be farther interested, and not half satisfied with the generalizing description of grace and beauty which her questions obtained for her. That all was perfection in this youth, she was well inclined to believe ; but the detail of perfections was, for very prudent reasons, withheld.

A fine opportunity of making progress in this interesting and interested business, was offered by the necessity of a grateful acknowledgment of the Lady Heraline's munificence ; and De Quinte produced from the interior of a letter to himself, a billet of elegant appearance written in the tenderest style of gratitude, and concluding with four lines of poetry *perfectly French*. It was impos-

sible now to repress the wish to know more of this charming young man ; and Annette, at the next confabulation, believing all that she heard, and probably in hopes of a speedy restoration to her own country as *femme de chambre* to a bride, boldly suggested the broad measure of trying to prevail on the earl to join in her noble feelings, and to become himself the young man's generous protector.—This gracious intention was first experimentized on Monsieur, and introduced by a sigh and a repetition of the wish to see this object of pity ; but it met no encouragement from De Quinte : he could bring forward strong arguments against the feasibility of such a scheme, the strongest of all, the absolute necessity of secrecy as to the young count's retreat. A palliative for disappointment was however soon found in the production of a miniature-picture, representing a youth some years younger than he was described, but of uncommon beauty, dressed in a Venetian costume—a costume of all others the most favourable to such pretensions.

For some months, Lady Heraline was paralysed by this picture ; and releasing her instructors from all their exertions for her, she felt full employment in the cultivation of a morbid sensibility, the stagnant surface of which was disturbed only by the ingenuity of Monsieur in fabricating mes-

sages and billets, to which she replied in a manner which her native pride happily preserved her from rendering degrading to herself. She was not yet come to that point of prudence which would have made her rejoice that her sign-manual never went farther than the chamber of her tutors.

The picture was now her comfort and her companion—it travelled from her bosom to her pillow; and the De Quintes found themselves much gainers in quiet by the absorption it produced. When the earl was a little more indisposed than usual, Monsieur and Madame could preserve a respectful silence, well knowing their *élève's* sources of consolation;—and Annette, without recognizing what she might presume the feelings of her young lady, could hint at the *soulagement* of *la belle passion*.

Still Lady Heraline's impatience to be more at liberty to be unhappy, made her wish that any accident would reveal to her father the state of what she thought her heart, and many expedients suggested themselves to her; but all had their relative objections. The most rational mode of proceeding would have been to interest her veteran friend Lady Drumcannon in the affair; but she needed not the especial advice of Annette to avoid this as the worst of all the rocks her little bark of hope could split on.—She would as soon have

consulted her shoemaker on her head-dress, as Lady Drumcannon on the present occupation of her mind: her ladyship might be an excellent chaperon; but it was out of all calculation that she could, in this moment of exigency, derive comfort from her. She did not distrust her on the score of too rigid principle or too firm prudence—she only concluded that she had no feeling, because she was old.—The inference was not perfectly fair: there *are* old ladies who, like old sportsmen, retain the relish of their former amusements.

The consequence of this perception of the dowager's inadaptability to the necessities of the present occupying contingency, was the suspension of intercourse in that quarter. It was impossible that Lady Heraline could so far detach her mind from its object as to write to Lady Drumcannon, when she could not assist her. Neglect was of no consequence; departure from professions did not strike her; and if ever Lady Drumcannon was mentioned by the earl, Lady Heraline told herself she would, at her first leisure, just be civil.

The clouds broke of themselves; and an opportunity of furthering her own warmest interests was presented, in a low-spirited fit of Lord Lynford's disease, in which he began to despair of himself and to give vent to his fatherly anxieties.

It was not, just now, his daughter's policy to

endeavour to dispel these.—She was more disposed to admit them as just, to sympathize with them as tender, and to confirm them by her acceptance and adoption.—A sigh and an averted look effected all this.

It was her birth-day ; and the earl ‘ was sorry his situation would not admit of any festive observance of it.’

‘ The *servants* may do as usual, I suppose, my lord,’ said she, rather emphatically.

His lordship proceeded to bemoan himself; and told himself ‘ what a distressing thing it would be to his daughter to be deprived of such a father.’

‘ If I had but had a brother!’ said she with a tolerable *façade* of earnestness.—

Lord Lynford was going to interrupt her—but she interrupted herself—‘ But then indeed——’

‘ Aye, “ then indeed,” you may well say,’ reiterated he—‘ But *then* indeed——’

There was a tone in this, which made the Lady Heraline change hers.—She looked very melancholy, and directed her eyes full on her father’s face, but with a tenderness of expression which she hoped would not pass unnoticed.

She was inexperienced:—she had not calculated on the small proportion which the invalids who care for the feelings of others, bear to the majority who are engrossed by their own.—It was lost la-

bour ; and now the father and daughter seemed competitors in the endeavour to make each other feel painfully.

‘ When I am gone—and I think I cannot last long now—you must keep the De Quintes with you—it is your best plan, at least till you are of age, or—— I should have liked to have lived to see you married—but I shall be in my grave long before that happens.’

‘ *My situation,*’ replied the Lady Heraline, taking out her handkerchief, ‘ will be most distressing—and the De Quintes, my lord, though they might be very useful to *you*, I should think very improper persons to protect *me*.’

‘ Why, what else can I do ?—I have named, of course, Lady Drumcannon your guardian ; but you cannot so well live with her—you must have your own establishment ; and the De Quintes will be the properest people at the head of it.’

‘ I could have wished, indeed, you could have lived, my lord, to see me settled to your satisfaction ; for I am sure I shall be miserably uncomfortable.’

‘ But how are you to be settled ?—There are many young men that I might like very well to give you to ; and things, I will own, have been hinted to me from more quarters than one ; but I am not in a state to make the election.’

Now was the moment of projection. 'Will you let me choose for myself?' said her ladyship, advancing unconsciously from her seat.

'Hey-day!' exclaimed his lordship—'Pray let me know, Lady Heraline, who is the happy man—pray tell me who it is that is to be honoured with the possession of my property; for, after all, *something* may depend upon my choice.—I did not quite expect this, I must confess—but I am a poor broken-down creature—of no consequence now to any body—so *I might* have expected this.—Pray, madam, let me into your councils—if I may be so bold.'

Lady Heraline was not by nature courageous beyond her sex; and the character she was forming for herself, though it might improve her in that which, if harshness were excusable, might be called audacity, was not well calculated to give her a contempt of danger on principle.—She would almost have rejoiced to see the floor open at her feet; but she had gone too far to recede. The moment was come that was to decide probably her fate for life—she pictured to herself the count at the park-gates; and, as the shortest way of opening them, and giving her father the information he requested, she produced the beloved miniature, and said, 'This,' my lord, 'is the object of my choice.'

Every ailment that had diminished the locomotive powers of the earl, seemed overcome or forgotten. He was ready to leap from his chair while, looking at the picture, which Lady Heraline would not trust out of her own fingers, he asked, whence she had that miniature.

Concluding that every emotion must be in her favour, she revealed the history of the young Frenchman, concealing, out of delicacy it must be supposed *to him*, the depressed state of his finances, and certainly out of a still more laudable regard towards *herself*, the assistance she had sent him. Perhaps it was because she thought it superfluous or dangerous, that she did not reveal the little romance of correspondence which they had established:—subtracting these three particulars, the object of her excited passion stood only in his natural situation, a man of high rank—in his enforced situation, one of the many thousand sufferers under state-convulsions—and in his relative situation, the object on which all the rays of those dispositions which constituted her mind, concentrated themselves.

Gratified beyond even her high feeling of whatever contributed to her indulgence, when thus, as she thought, a call was made upon her frankness; while the earl remained in a state of comparative abstraction, she proceeded, in hope of turning the

balance decidedly to her own side, to heap charms and pretensions on the young man, such as she thought best suited to win her father's regard. It was an *ad libitum* movement—no wax-doll in a toy-shop was ever more at liberty to receive fashions and decorations from the hand of a new purchaser. Nothing but a good taste prevented the union of incongruities.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT was the height *from* which Lady Heraline fell—what was the depth *into* which she fell, when her father, who had not suffered his countenance to give her any warning, replied with ineffable contempt—‘A fine story they have told you! why, the picture is mine!’

‘Yours, my lord!’ repeated his daughter—‘It never could be like *you*.’

‘I mean,’ said Lord Lynford, ‘it is mine by right and by possession; and I beg it may be returned to the cabinet from which it was taken—Did *you* take it out?’

‘No—no—indeed, my lord.’

‘Who then?’

‘I had it from Monsieur or Madame—I do not exactly recollect which of them it was who gave it last to me—But who *is* it, my lord?’

‘Who is it? Why it is—the young Pretender:—you have heard of *him*, hav’n’t you?’

‘Why, they told *me* it was the young count.’

‘Pooh!—it is no young count, I assure you—here is some mischief going on—either you are deceiving *me*, Heraline, or they have some scheme

against *you*.—God bless my soul!—this is enough to finish me at once—I shall be in my grave in a week—I am all over in such a tremor—these people—these people that I have so trusted!—God bless my soul!—It is hard to have such things come upon *me*—and in *my* precarious state—with one foot in the grave.’

‘ Shall I call Monsieur ?’ said Lady Heraline intimidated.

‘ No no—not now—if there is to be any question, I cannot stand it—give me the picture—and give me some lavender-drops—there they stand—can’t you see?—no, no—not that bottle—that is the æther—Lord bless me ! don’t you know red lavender from æther?—put thirty drops upon a bit of sugar—there, there, I am sure there ’s enough—bring it me.—There—now I shall be better—but give me the picture—I say, give *me* the picture.’

She reluctantly obeyed, frightened at the disobedience connected with her obedience ; for the De Quintes had not failed to impress on her mind the secrecy in which she must enjoy the possession of the miniature.—Two considerations acting in an opposite direction to the simple impulse of duty, she almost doubted what she ought to do—but her father’s last tone settled her proceeding ; and a few words of milder persuasion, which seemed to acquit her, however he might condemn

others, left her to the bitter feeling of this renunciation, but without the added suffering of the terror which had at first shaken her.

Having presumed to act in this nice affair without instruction, and having gone counter to all the injunctions she had received, she felt extremely at a loss to answer even the questions now put to her in order to get at the truth, so as to ward off evil from the De Quintes. Utterly losing all ability of pilotage in the unknown narrow sea which threatened her with shipwreck of her best hopes, she seized what she thought the exigency of the moment, and affirmed and denied what before she had denied and affirmed, till she was giddy with confusion, apprehensive for herself if the De Quintes should in any way be made to suffer for her rashness, and unwilling or feeling it impossible to forego their mediation in her most important interest; for, as yet, her faith in the existence of the charming foreigner was not shaken. The previous question of the miniature remained for discussion; but this her sagacity told her was not, of necessity, connected with the story of the count.

The earl still animated by the business before him, but shrinking from the violence of conflict, for his own sake as well as his daughter's, condescended to mild expressions as he proceeded, in no very sagacious way, in this investigation. He had,

however, brought her to the point of a succinct relation of the whole affair, which he heard with tolerable patience ; and at its conclusion, giving her the key of a cabinet which stood in a room which, as given up to papers and parchments, she seldom visited, he told her that, if his claims to the picture deserved credit, she would find there, if not the case in which it was usually deposited, at least some proof that something was wanting. She could not deny that the appearance of the cabinet agreed with what he had taught her to expect—a case which the picture fitted was there ; and it was empty ; but still *la belle passion* and the romance of the count were predominant over the credit due merely to a father who might have views in deceiving her. It mattered not that, through life he had shown indulgence, in all the weakness of excess, to her inclinations—it was of no avail that she was the sole object of his anxiety—that he had not the habit of imposing on her—and that she had no foundation for distrust. The De Quintes, to many of whose paltry dealings she was privy—to whose management of her father she was no stranger, and who were in no way entitled to credit, had told her what it was agreeable to her to believe ; and she believed them, in spite even of no small degree of dislike to them. She however, for the present, acquiesced in the earl's con-

trol over her ; and when, under great exhaustion, he demanded a truce till the morrow, and enjoined the most perfect silence till he had considered how he might best act, she began to revolve in her mind the great advantage she had gained by the disclosure, and to question whether a decisive step that should substitute asking pardon for asking permission, or a feigned renunciation and patient waiting the fulfilment of his lordship's promises of a short demand on her powers of endurance, were the preferable mode of conducting her now avowedly important affair. At all events, her father knew she was in love, and the softened tone with which he had broken off their conversation, did not leave her without hope :—he might talk to De Quinte in private, and his favourable disposition might exculpate her from blame for the revelation she had made—or De Quinte, when he perceived how far the affair had gone, might try to persuade his lordship to what he might already well know was her inclination—it was, too clearly to be questioned, the interest of the De Quintes to obtain her gratification—in short, she would just hear what Annette had to say, and then she should consider herself as in a far better situation than a few hours before.

The time till she could enter into confidential communication with Annette, dragged heavily.

Next to an interview with a lover, may probably be ranked an interview with his advocate; and though Annette often incurred the displeasure of Madame De Quinte, when her influence over her young mistress showed itself, yet in this point they seemed to agree; and Annette fancied she was furthering the design of those whom, on all other occasions, she hated as much as she dared, and feared more than she confessed, even to herself.

But the relative situations of these two powers had, while the Lady Heraline was closeted with the earl, received a new direction. Annette had incurred the displeasure of Madame for some want of consideration for her superiority, and had been threatened with such a representation of her misbehaviour, as should end in her dismissal. Concluding that the subject would be discussed between the husband and wife, at their next *tête-à-tête* in their private apartment, and wishing to know how far their intentions were serious, in order to her claiming the protection of Lady Heraline in time, she listened within ear-shot of their place of consultation, and had the satisfaction of finding herself forgotten in their alarm, or rather their agreeable surprise, at the decidedly increased precariousness of the earl's life, in the course of that day. They knew no cause for what they perceived; and that which, had they been privy to what

had passed, they would most unfeelingly have considered as a mere temporary increase of agitation, they concluded to be wholly disease, and a prognostic which called upon them to have their wits about them.

Absorbed by their own interests, in the means of promoting which they did not quite agree, their voices were loud; and rendered incautious by the general security of a foreign language, they argued without apprehension of attracting curiosity. Annette's vicinity never entered into their suppositions:—the scene of her performances was far from that of their projects; she had been snubbed and threatened, and of course with good effect—for a doubt of the efficacy of any of their attempts, would have been a most absurd novelty in their calculations. They therefore talked at large on the present posture of affairs; and discussing their interests in it, proposals on one part brought out objections and amendments on the other, till Mademoiselle Annette was mistress of their motives and their movements.

She learnt, and with not more concern than was expressed by her informers, that Lord Lynford could not live another month—that his will was made—that in it, Monsieur and Madame De Quinte were *passablement* provided for—but not so entirely to their satisfaction, as to render them

independent ; but as this state, so coveted by more northern spirits, was not absolutely necessary to their enjoyment, they seemed to look forward with proper acquiescence in the still-subsisting necessity of preserving their influence over his lordship's daughter. De Quinte, as if to approve himself to the partner of his schemes, related energetically the means he had employed to obtain from the earl, a powerful fatherly recommendation to his daughter, still to keep them near her person—which his lordship had promised to enforce verbally, in the interim, while waiting for his own demise : thus far the pair were in unison ; but on the mode in which they should exercise the power thus obtained, their opinions differed, Monsieur calculating all his deductions on the datum of Lady Heraline's celibacy, and Madame scouting the idea of her pupil's submitting to such privation. She earnestly recommended the far more profitable measure of disposing of the heiress, not merely to their own lucrative advantage at the moment, but so as to render the fortunate purchaser equally with herself, subservient to them ; and in defence of her plan, she not absurdly urged, as an invincible objection to her husband's, the passion now excited in the young lady's mind. She asked him, somewhat contemptuously, whether he thought the lips that had once suffered Cupid

to offer to them honey, even on the point of his arrow, would not shrink from the flavourless ice repellingly proffered by the unthawing hand of prudence. She called upon Monsieur rather to consider how he should accomplish the *finale* of his own plot for enslaving the heart of the young lady, than to devise a new scheme in an opposite direction to it.

And here opened on Annette the grand revelation of the instability of that on which she knew her mistress built all her hopes of happiness, and she herself all her expectations of requital, not only for the sacrifices she had made in renouncing, not her country, but all the opportunities which even her scanty supply of intelligence from her family told her, the confusion of the time had offered to persons of their pretensions and principles, to mount into saddles from which they had unhorsed the legitimate occupiers.

So utterly foundationless did all that Annette had been told by the Lady Heraline as the details of Monsieur, now show itself, that he and his wife were absolutely consulting on the raising up some one to perform the part which their young count was said to be so impatient to enact; and Annette heard propositions for substitutions, at which she felt, as they were not *her* contrivance, indignant; and having listened, to the extent of her stolen

time, she was fairly in possession of the involuntary confidence of the parties. When therefore she next attended on Lady Heraline, and had heard to the end, her impatient detail of all that had occurred, she did not wait for the opening of the debate to which this information was the preface ; but she decidedly declared herself the partisan of the earl, and defending him from all suspicion of deceiving or of exercising arbitrary authority, she eulogized his sagacity, and gave it all the sanction which, by betraying what she had heard, she could afford it.

Had any one listened to Annette as she had listened to her informers, she might, or she *must* rather, have appeared the most trust-worthy of all *soubrettes*, and the most prudent of young women. Endeavouring to compose the disturbed spirits of Lady Heraline, in whose mind various conflicting feelings had raised no trifling tempest, she conjured her ladyship to be on her guard against ‘these wicked people,’ and rather to consider the earl as her best friend, than such a man as Monsieur ; and one consideration apart, the young lady would have felt enough of pride and indignation to have carried her cause and the culprits to their proper tribunal ; but there was something to be renounced with her confidence ; and however she might decide, the struggle was great—she must give up a

prepossession—she must be convinced that that which she had accepted as a substance, was but a shadow.

To get rid now of Annette, was far more desirable to her than to detain her: she therefore, after two hours' perturbation, such as could admit no prospect of sleep, consented to go to bed that she might be alone; and, for the sake of quiet, promising to consider what she had heard, she at length felt at liberty to persuade herself that the earl had induced Annette to assist in deceiving her, and that the house was divided equally into a party for and another against her.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAVING come to this conclusion, which, uninfluenced by the interest excited in her heart, the exertion of one-half of her usual sagacity would have shown her was absurd, she had to make her election between these two supposed parties; but the strong hints thrown out, of the earl's precarious situation, controlled the active part of her decision, and left her in the very tolerable comfort of a prudent resolution to keep her opinions and intentions to herself, to observe closely, and to act on what she called her own *cool judgment*.

The first step in this proceeding, was to look particularly blank on Annette when she made her appearance in the morning at her bed-side, in order to discourage her from all repetition of what in recollection had been very painful. She considered her waiting-maid as entirely under the influence even of her wishes, and had no suspicion that any change of treatment could occasion the smallest change in a being so subservient to her. She therefore neither watched Annette's looks, nor observed on the agitation of her manner—had she fixed her attention on either, or on both united, she would probably have concluded that fear of

her was the sole feeling of her mind, and that she had only to excite it still more, to crush attempts which she considered as in action for base purposes—she knew not what, except that of marring her happiness.

Distinction of ranks is always levelled between persons embarked in a scheme requiring mutual confidence. Harry and Falstaff are indeed never two princes; but they are, not unfrequently, two bandits. Annette was never, and never could even have attempted to represent, the high-minded English lady; but when the high-minded English lady came down to sighing sentiment and expedients, Annette could echo and suggest, as tragically and as efficaciously, as any one of higher talents or more extended information. She therefore watched the countenance of Lady Heraline, with the various expressions of which she was tolerably acquainted, and read there in legible characters, a disposition not at all favourable to some new hopes, into which the discovery of the former evening had converted her aërial prospects. She no longer feasted her imagination with a wedding and a trip across the channel; but she saw, in far greater solidity and much nearer, the possibility of supplanting the De Quintes, and by giving her hand to some one of the best of her adorers, establishing this favoured object and herself as

maitre d'hotel and *dame d'atour* to an heiress, who would be easily made to see with any eyes rather than her own. In some points, this scheme was preferable to an immediate return to her own country—that was a resource at any time, and would not be rendered at all less agreeable by the means of enjoyment she might collect in a munificent English house—for the present, therefore, she determined to be honest, clearly seeing that it was her very best policy.

Once decided on the measure, she was awake to the necessity of despatch. Should Lady Heraline obstinately retain her misplaced confidence in the De Quintes, which her deportment gave abundant reason to fear, the sacrifice of her waiting-maid, who must have incurred some degree of her displeasure, if she failed in proof or was not allowed to bring it forward, would be a trivial consideration with her. The young lady's toilette-duties, therefore, were not so quickly finished as Annette's deliberations. Her mind was made up to betray to Lord Lynford, not what she had heard from Lady Heraline—for every syllable of *that* she was fully prepared to deny—but all that her own industry had obtained from the revelations of the De Quintes, and if necessary to her own security, to face, to contradict, to convict persons whom the progress of her own thoughts had now ar-

ranged to her imagination, as forming a rival power, in the termination of whose existence alone, her own could be rendered permanent.

But there was a remaining difficulty—how should she get access to Lord Lynford? There was not the smallest link of intercourse between his lordship and herself—or rather herself and his lordship—De Quinte stood between the earl and every man-servant except the valet ; and Madame, if a message was to be carried between the father and daughter, uniformly interposed her good offices ; but the certainty that she had but one door to get in at, shortened her doubts which to knock at ; she knew that a few of her blandishments would make the valet obsequious to her ; and these she unhesitatingly used to induce him to inform the earl, that she had something of great importance to tell, which must be told immediately, and to tell which, she begged his lordship to give her an audience in private, before he left his dressing-room—secrecy was requested.

When his lordship's morning making-up was finished, and while his daughter was tuning her harp to strains of confidence, under those adversities which are substituted by the happy and the idle, for the real cares and disquietudes of life, the damsel was admitted into the dressing-room. No interest, no occupation of mind could make her

forego the opportunity of 'playing amiable;' but the earl, who had been sadly unnerved by what he had already discovered, and who was looking forward with dismay to the exertion he felt himself called on to make, could only shake his head as saying, 'T is all too late now : ' he encouraged her however to approach him, and professed himself disposed to listen.

The fountain once in play, there was neither occasion nor interval, to say, 'Go on.' Even with all the gesticulations appropriate to the business, all the claims to praise that could be interposed, all the oblique compliments and the soft *cajoleries* that taste and experience dictated as matter of furtherance, Annette's volubility soon got to the end of a detail, which would have stuck three times as long a period, in the entanglements of an English plebeian's elocution.

This new shock was considerably abated by the opening made to this business on the preceding day, and the earl accepted the proffered aid, as coming in time to give him fortitude to do that which he of necessity was resolved to do. Unwilling, as a helpless person whom indolence has rendered unused to business, must ever feel, to part from so generally useful a deputy as De Quinte, he had yet sometimes, and particularly of

late, when his nerves had been more than usually susceptible, felt disposed to quarrel with the very authority he had given away ; and he who some years before called on ‘ all men to hail him happy ’ in the treasure he had obtained by no greater a sacrifice than that of leave to follow his own inclination and judgment, now, in the present probability of change, began to discover that an exoneration was desirable :—he could not, however, refrain from bewailing himself, even though there was no one but Annette to hear his wailings. She, poor soul ! could lend only one ear—the other was pitched to the expected sound of her lady’s bell : she therefore endeavoured to cut the matter short, by professing her readiness to face those whom she had accused, if his lordship would only protect her against the resentment of the Lady Heraline, by convincing her of the claim such disinterested conduct as that she had adopted, had on her ladyship’s *reconnoissance*. But she could not be so easily dismissed : the earl, in utter destitution of means, could arrange no plan for an efficacious use of his new knowledge : he could only, in the true spirit of shrinking from exertion, and skulking from a reptile he was afraid of—resolve to breakfast alone, and to make his yesterday’s disquiet a reason for not seeing his

daughter. But still recurred the question—‘How shall we *explode* the business?’—he might have added—‘without my feeling the recoil.’

The application of three fingers to her forehead, gave Annette the ability to advise the peer:—she replied in words, which, translated, said,

‘Oh! I have thought—your lordship knows yourself to be very ill, you say you are. Now, in my country—they used—I don’t know what they do now—for all things are altered—but they used, when I was a pretty little girl there, when any body was very ill, and thought they must die—they used to send for Monsieur le Curé.—Now, my lord, you say you are ill—you are worse—you think you must die—God forbid! but if you send for Monsieur le Curé, perhaps he could tell you what is best to do, or could do this for you—and nobody would think any other thing, than that you are just going to die—which you know would not, my lord, surprise any body.’

At any other moment, who would have dared in the same breath to have proposed the expulsion of the De Quintes, and the introduction of Mr. Meryon, now so long a stranger at St. Eméril’s Court, to further this hostile purpose? As little agreeable would such a hint of the frail tenure of life have sounded in Lord Lynford’s ears, but now all was on a sudden changed; and

there was a mixture of approbation, with something not quite so laudatory, in the smile which the pert promptitude of the Frenchwoman forced from his disturbed features. She volunteered her services to spread any reports which he might think proper to send from his breakfast-table, but she was now become too well aware of the importance of muffling the dagger-hand of an assassin, to repeat the offer of nearer assistance.

Annette could stay no longer. She was forced to commit the circumstances of these measures to his lordship's sagacity ; and satisfied that she had laid a train, which must blow up her enemies, and devolve their credit upon her, she went briskly about her daily business, waiting for some impulse from the dressing-room, and even under the necessary delay, growing apprehensive that his lordship's courage would not hold out, and that she herself might be the victim of her own endeavours.

At last, and before she had again seen her lady, her listening ears, as she wandered about to catch sounds, were greeted by a laugh and its echo, which proceeded from the butler's pantry, and which she soon found was excited by the circulating intelligence, that ' the earl had certainly seen the devil—that he was in a great fright and

going to die, and that he had sent for the parson, a sure sign he could not live many hours.'

His lordship's idea of his own danger had been with more delicacy communicated to the Lady Heraline, by De Quinte himself. He had seen the earl, found him extremely ill, and really thought him now delirious, for he had ordered Mr. Meryon to be sent for, which he could never have done, had he been in his senses.

Madame De Quinte took her station by the Lady Heraline; d husband and wife made up sufficient of grimace to get through their parts—De Quinte talked lightly of death, as 'the affair of three minutes,' as 'a final necessity, against which there was no protection, and under which there was no consolation'—he jabbered about 'philosophy and temporary existence—the bubble human life, and that bursting of it, human death:' he talked to his wife jocularly of his utter indifference about it, promised 'delicacies to worms, and a fine growth of cabbages from the place of his interment;' and, as if to teach their pupil how to think, patted Madame's cheek with the back of his hand, while he declared that 'were she to die to-morrow, his only care would be to get another pretty wife.'

Lady Heraline was more disgusted with this coarse banter, and more impressed with that which

called it forth, than they intended her to have been : —she had never seen death so near the threshold of her home ; and though a second thought might have landed her contemplation safe on her own interest, she now was offended at the levity of her companions, and interposed with energy the observation, that ‘ it must be a fearful thing to die.—If,’ said she, ‘ it is a subject of terror to go into a cavern, or to be benighted in an unknown country— if darkness, and solitude, and inexperience bring with them horror, and melancholy, and distraction, what must that state be in which all these combine ? I am afraid my father will be very much terrified ; for I do not think he has given up any of his hopes of living ; and to be surprised thus, must add to his distress : I should like to go to him, but what could I say ?’

Expressions of astonishment and testifications of contempt met her words ; and De Quinte, though professing himself waited for by his lord, paused on his last footstep, to scout, as the indelible impression of an ill-taught infancy, the existence of ideas ‘ so weak, so puerile, so unphilosophical.’ Mr. Meryon, always hated, was now the object of his most pointed sarcasm ; and as if determined to root out from the mind of Lady Heraline, this sprout of a plant which he had fancied long since past vegetation, he praucingly de-

clared his resolution to show Mr. Meryon the way out of St. Emeril's Court, if he perceived that any use was to be made of his professional services.—‘ If my lord wished to shake hands, and die in friendship, he should not hinder that, or if he meant to order his funeral or to make a bequest to the poor ; but he would have no *comédie larmoyante*, when he had the management of things.’

Left to Madame De Quinte, she had a different species of consolation to endure. *She* admired filial duty, and had herself been the best of daughters to her own parents, but still she owned she always saw with regret, fathers and mothers living till their children were almost in person as old as themselves. ‘ In the state in which my lord was, and had been for years, he had no enjoyment ; and what was life when its pleasures were gone ? and her ladyship herself had no prospect but that of a repetition of dreary winters and un-used summers.—The “*dolce primavera*” of her life was passing by, without her being conscious of its existence ; and, with all her *grand* respect for her ladyship's illustrious parent, she could not so far depart from her sincerity, as to wish the prolongation of a life that was a burden to him, and a communication of his paralysis to the mind of his daughter.’ The great domain, the grand

establishment, and liberty to choose to whom she should resign it, were delicately brought before the unshrinking eyes of her imagination—and her ladyship might probably have heard more ingenious detail; but fearful of betraying in any closer conversation, the attack which had been made on her faith in one point, she withdrew herself from Madame, and sending Annette to inquire into the proceedings of her father's private room, she awaited her return in very uneasy solitude.

CHAPTER IX.

ANNETTE'S report was, that his lordship had been relieved by a violent flood of tears ; that the apothecary, who had just seen him, apprehended no immediate danger ; and that Mr. Meryon had arrived, and was then closeted with the earl.

Lady Heraline, for want of occupation, and unable to be still, would have detained the waiting-woman in conversation ; but Annette thought it now her turn to be cool, and treated her mistress with a very pretty imitation of the *de haut en bas*, which she had so often seen her practise.

All this was intolerable. Her ladyship preferred solitude to insult, and therefore walked out into the garden, where she saw an old man at work, whose especial business it was to keep in order the spot she called *her* garden.—*He* had not offended, and to somebody she must talk. She began with a few trifling questions of kindness ; and to the answer was joined an expression of respectful regret, that the situation of his lord was now so hopeless, and his life drawing to a close.

‘ My father,’ said Lady Heraline, as if to com-

fort the old man, ' is now arrived at a considerable age.'

' True, my lady ; but I have generally observed that, however long gentlefolks live, they like, please God ! to live a little longer.'

' And do not poor people ?'

' Why, not so much I think, my lady. When we have toiled and struggled through threescore years, I think, if we have thought at all, we are pretty ready to lie down in our quiet graves ; and I sometimes wonders as great folks ben't more ready than us—for if I lived their life, by what I see of it, I think I should be still more tired of it than of hard work—in hard work there's something done, something's the better for it ; but in their lives, it seems to me always beginning and never done.'

' But you cannot judge, my good man, of that which you cannot see : you do not see how we live.'

' That's true, my lady, and I suppose I am wrong—and I am sure I am very bold to speak so ; but only having known your ladyship from your cradle, I hope no offence.'

' None at all, John ; I like to hear you. Tell me why you think the life of great people tiresome ?'

' Why, because they looks I always thinks unhappy—my poor lord, I am sure, has not had a

smile to bestow on me this many a day, and your ladyship, Lord love you! can never be happy under the command of those mounseer people—why, they wind you, every body says, round their finger as I do this bit of grass, though I should have my ears cut off for saying so. They be people as fear neither God nor devil—I'm sure I should be tired of living with *them*.'

'But you say, John, that poor people die contentedly.'

'Yes, why should they not?—you great folks, my lady, have mayhap eat your white bread first, we have had our brown; and we trust in God the white is to come, when we are out of this troublesome world.'

'What do you mean, John, by your brown bread, and your white bread?'

'Why I mean, to be sure, my lady, that the brown is this world, and the white is the world to come—and though I've eat the brown bread, and been thankful for it, and could relish it very well, yet I can't but say I shall be very well pleased to have a share in the white, when I goes away from here in God's good time—but his will be done.'

'Then you *do* expect to be happier in the next world than in this?'

'Certainly; else, why did I work for my pa-

rents?—why did I nurse a sick wife?—why have I brought up my children in the sweat of my brow, to fear God, and keep his commandments? If I may be so bold as to say it, poor ignorant man as I am!—though some of us, and such as you, my lady, may have a sort of a love of God, as we read about him in the Bible, I can't say I believe that we could get through this world as we ought, if we warn't afraid of his anger and in hopes of his goodness.—Never tell me, says I to Will Stephens t'other day, about your fine notions of good for good-sake, or God for God-sake; I tell you the fear of Hell, and the hopes of Heaven, must be kept up, or we, poor creatures, shall go like a parcel of wild asses put into a team, one here and t'other there; but all in any way but the right.'

'And what is your idea, your expectation, John, of another world?'

'*There*, my lady,' answered John, resting both hands on his spade, and shaking his head, '*there* I'm sadly puzzled—I knows not what it may be; but, in my thoughts, I tells myself it will be always sunshine, without being overhot, as y' may say, always moonlight without night like; I shall have my belly filled without meat, and my drowth quenched, without drink—I shall see and know what I can't find out now—I shall walk about

with good and knowing people all about me. I shall want nothing and wish for nothing; and my work will be done, and my pleasure will be to thank God, and tell every body how good he has been to me, in forgiving my many many sins and—wickednesses, I can't say; for I never was, thank God, a wicked one; and I am not bound to make myself out worse than I am; but sins, God knows, we all falls into; and if he had not sent his blessed Son among us, to take upon himself for us, God only knows where we were to look for comfort: and not only to forgive my sins, as I say, but, as I *may* say, to reward me for the little I could do that was right, which I'm sure if his holy Spirit, that our good parson explains to us sometimes, did not put it in our minds, we could not do it.'

'Well but, John, where do you get these notions?—what ground have you for these expectations?'

'Why, my lady, you are joking—haven't we the Bible, which is God's word? won't we take God's word? And then ha'n't we, as I say, our Mr. Meryon to make things easy to our compacities? Ah my lady, I hope I be not bold—but how I do wish my lord and our Mr. Meryon had not quarrelled.—He might have been a comfort to my lord now.'

'They have not *quarrelled*—nay, I believe they

are friends ; Mr. Meryon is now with my father.'

'Blessed be God!' said the old man, dropping his spade—'May we all meet in Heaven! I have eat, as I may say, my lord's bread, sin I was a child: he brought me here from Lunnun, I was my lady your mother's foot-boy, or indeed her man's foot-boy; and I couldn't eat my master's bread without wishing to meet him again in another world.—I always prays for him, and for you, my lady.'

'Then you hope your prayers are heard, I suppose—this must be great comfort to you.'

'Comfort! my lady—it is comfort, I wouldn't exchange to be the owner of all this fine place.'

'But what makes you believe your prayers are heard?'

'Why, the very comfort I feel in asking God for what I wants, and thanking him for what I has. Beside, what surety can I want beyond what the Scriptures gives me?—Why, try yourself, my lady, if ever you are in distress or affliction, God keep you from it! Do but open, we'll just say, the book of Psalms any where—I likes the Psalms, they are so suited to every body and every thing, and every body's business; and you will see, depend upon it, something suited to you at the time.—I remember all the while I was so tor-

mented with that good-for-nothing Robert Morris, as wanted to make out that I had got what he ought to have had, when I had been obliged to bear a great deal, because he was my wife's relation, and I didn't care to be unkind to him, as sure as I opened my Bible, to get a little peace to go to sleep upon, so sure I found somewhat to comfort me and give me spirits.—I remember, specially once, when I was almost distracted, I opened at the twenty-seventh Psalm, and after I had read it, I went to sleep like a lamb.—And I am ashamed to say—but I won't ever mind if I can give glory to God, the last time I was drawn in to deal with these smugglers, after I had heard our Mr. Meryon's famous sermon on that text, you know, my lady, "Tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom," and when I had said positively I never would deal with 'em again, and I did it in spite of my word—O how miserable I was! And then, when I came to myself, like the prodigal son I was so unhappy—and shame on me! I cried like a child—no shame to cry, my lady, but a shame to need it—why, then too, as y' may guess, I went to my Bible, no, it was my Prayer-book, it's all one, and there I found, when I opened it—"Blessed is he whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." And there all the Psalm went on, as if it had said,

“ Mind, don’t be wrong again, and then be of good heart.” Who, my lady, would not be comforted with this? and who would ask a better guide than this? ’

The man’s eyes were glazed, his lips quivered, as he looked to the Lady Heraline for her confirmation of his hypothesis. She could not reply:—she took out her purse, and made her lovely fingers the messengers of her generous feelings. She walked on in thoughtful musing, but not precisely of the description of her late musings—she was disposed to say to herself, that in John Brown’s homely system, and even under all the disadvantage of his uncouth expressions, there was a solidity, a substantiality which neither Monsieur nor his wife could give to their dialectics. She began to think that the ignorant might be the best teachers of what was right and fit to do; but her thoughts naturally recurring to a better authority, existing in the person of Mr. Meryon, she at last settled into a more rational opinion, that a set of people educated for the purpose of explaining and enforcing subjects of this kind, were as necessary, if those subjects were of importance, as physicians and dancing-masters.

Her present contemplations had excluded from the recollections of the moment, not only the critical situation of the earl her father, but the

grievous sacrifice which she had been compelled to make the day before. The disturbance of her rest in the past night—a disturbance to which she was wholly un-used, had, in her regular mode of existence, an effect on her sensations which was as painful as it was new ; and it soon disposed her to turn her thoughts to any quarter that promised restoration, if not of quiet, of that morbid delirium which was spreading itself like the work of spiders over her imagination:—she could not recover this—she could not seek it where alone it was, in her apprehension, to be found—her heart beat violently in the contemplation of the restored picture ; but it was not that playful pulsation which those who had excited it, could rally and flatter—it was a strange feeling, and at every effort to still it, it sent her back to the recollection of poor John Brown.

This did not however last long—she had wandered onward, still farther distant from the house, for about half an hour, in a distressing fermentation of mind, when her own peculiar man-servant overtook her, and requested her, in the earl's name, to return immediately.—She asked hastily if her father was worse, and receiving that usual answer, ‘ I do not know,’ she accepted it for ‘ Yes,’ and again thinking on John Brown, quickened her steps.—In her way, she repassed the old man.

He was still at work, and lifting up his face without unbending his bowed back, he said affectionately, 'Well! God bless you, my lady, I pity you, but never mind—there is a God for the orphan:—let us all take up our burdens, they will be lightened by-and-by.'

Open to all impressions—the last always the strongest—Lady Heraline involuntarily paused; but shrinking from, instead of growing courageous in her duty, she felt an inclination to make John Brown follow her to the house—it was too ridiculous; and she could have chastised her folly, if she had known where it was seated—it was not entirely cured, however, by her displeasure—the inclination came up again, but she coaxed it away by a very reasonable supposition, that Mr. Meryon might do as well as John Brown.

She entered the house, and found the servants duly stationed from the hall to the earl's drawing-room, to facilitate her admission. Again she paused, and seemed almost retreating—she had proceeded as far in something she wished to say, as 'Could not——' further she could not proceed—the speech, if perfected, might have been, 'Could not Mr. Meryon come out to me?'—But in sounding his name to her own ear, she felt an indefinite sense of shame. She was not now in an audacious mood, though the mood was not un-

usual with her when she had to suffer—she asked no questions, ‘ Who is Mr. Meryon?’ or ‘ What am I *not*?’ She thought of no inheritance, no independence—neither of miniature-pictures, nor handsome Frenchmen—she expected to see something little short of a corpse, perhaps, if she delayed longer, a corpse in all its ghastliness.—Mr. Meryon she might see on his knees, with a book in his hand:—Monsieur De Quinte might be, in the grief necessary for the occasion, talking to himself of his ‘ *bon ami*:’—Madame must be officiously administering and chattering—but whatever the accompaniments, the reality was the same;—she was summoned to a sight that must appall her feelings, if it did not conciliate her affections.—‘ I do not know whether I shall not be more grieved than I expected,’ said she to herself as the door opened, and she tried to reduce the firm tread of her natural dignity, to the gentle pat of obsequious delicacy.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT did she really see when she entered the room? Not the earl on the splendid couch of his superb drawing-room, his features wrung, his cheek pale, and his eye gazing at vacancy—neither did she find him fevered with impatience at her delay, and straining his departing powers to catch the first certainty of her approach. She found him in his after-breakfast costume, sitting at a table, part of the covering of which was indeed his medicine-chest in full freightage. Various glasses, of various tinges, graduated and lipped for accuracy of admixture and convenience of transference, showed that he had not merely *looked* at his comforts; but his lordship, though in a sort of crying posture of features, had no appearance of immediate dissolution:—he extended his best hand, as his daughter, in very gratifying emotion, came gently up to him, and said, ‘I am better now, my dear, don’t alarm yourself, we shall all do better, I hope; but it has been a sad business for *me*.’

She could almost have said, ‘Thank God!’ but De Quinte was standing with his face towards a window; and though his back was presented to her,

and he remained without the smallest approach to a more respectful diagonal of position, she felt the exclamation, not perhaps culpable or absurd in itself, but out of keeping just now, and perhaps liable to incur hereafter, a daunting application of ridicule and sarcasm.—Mr. Meryon was at a distant table, writing; and to him, as she in silence let go her father's hand, she ventured to make a slight curtsy: her own feelings would have admitted of more; but she dared not bid them please themselves.—Madame was on the twin-couch to that on which the earl was seated; and though her face was covered with a handkerchief, as she reclined her elbow on the end of the couch, her gulps and the pressure of her other hand against the region of gulps, indicated that whatever the present state of the climate, it had been a stormy one.

To four points almost opposite, was the Lady Heraline now attracted—a sensation of relief in finding the scene so different from what she had portrayed it to her imagination, would have drawn her to her father, to congratulate at least *herself* on the escape from oppressive necessities: respect and a sort of instinctive appreciation, would have made her come in contact with Mr. Meryon.—A wish for information, and the habit of being prompted, would have sent her to Mon-

sieur, while the echoes of words seldom long out of hearing, ‘*devoir,*’ ‘*politesse,*’ ‘*considération pour moi,*’ would have driven her, through fear of reproof, to inquire into the sufferings of his wife.

Under these influences, she remained in the proper situation, the centre ; and there she stood, a statue, for some moments—not by many degrees so much an object of admiration even to a father’s fondness, or the pride of tutors, as to the charitable affection of him who had the most cause, the only cause, to think harshly of her. There was not a person in the groupe who had so fair a right to plead his own virtues, as a reason for demanding virtue in others—there was not one who could say as he could, ‘What fellowship can there be amongst us?’ he stood exemplary and independent:—he had not partaken of the follies of his patron to obtain his boons—he had not entered into the *tracasseries* of those who governed him, in the hope of sharing in plunder or a future administration: he had not flattered a misguided girl in hopes of succeeding to her favour—he had spoken his conscientious sentiments with firmness but with respect:—he knew that what he had done was known, he knew himself hated, but he knew he could not be despised; and thus unconcerned for himself, he was at liberty to feel for others, to

sheathe the sword with which he might have wounded, and to give the primary cause of all his temporary degradation, not only the honour due to her rank, or the admiration due to the charms of her person, but the tenderest feeling of interest that any heart but that of a parent has to offer—a feeling of interest which, passing over all that for which parents too often supplicate Heaven in favour of their offspring, carried this good man's ideas to the throne of his ultimate Judge, in the hope of leading thither, by the gentlest methods, this sheep now beguiled from his flock.

The business of the scene unfolded itself; and at the earl's request, Mr. Meryon stood up to let the Lady Heraline into what was passing—his lordship making a little prefatory speech expressive of the restoration of his confidence to him—and then desiring him to go on, and his daughter to take her seat on the same couch with himself.

Mr. Meryon attempted to obey; but the earl's commentary on what he began to say, soon amounting to the recital itself, the vicar very judiciously, and perhaps not very unwillingly, gave way, and suffered his patron to proceed, till the exasperation of his passion having disabled him, he again took refuge in deputation. All together, the Lady Heraline was informed that Monsieur and Madame were receiving their dismissal—that

their conduct had, in the discovery of various particulars, very much distressed the earl; but that they had been made to understand what was their best prudence—and that their final and immediate expulsion was decided on, awaiting only the presence of her ladyship, that a measure so highly necessary, might not wear an appearance of clandestine proceeding towards her.

Lady Heraline had gazed and listened in astonishment, as if doubting her own existence. Involuntarily she would have risen and approached Madame; but from this, both her protectors hindered her. She then begged leave to withdraw, and was allowed to retreat to the hardly less exceptionable care of Annette. But in the present state of things, even Annette could not do much mischief. When informed by her lady of that on which she had much better information, she was lavish of her ‘*Bon Dieu,*’ and ‘*Graces à Dieu,*’ ‘*mi-lord* was *le bon père,*’ ‘Monsieur Meryon was *le bon curé,*’ and all was hope and prospect in the mind and fortunes of Mademoiselle Annette.

‘I would turn that girl away too, my lord,’ said Mr. Meryon, when, having dismissed the De Quintes, with a charge to be gone from the house in two hours, and from the village in two days, he advised the recall of the Lady Heraline.

The earl had time to declare against this vio-

lent proceeding—to Annette he was obliged for the most important fact of this information—‘ he would never betray her, even to Lady Heraline,’ and ‘ he must insist on being allowed to follow the lead of his own feeling here. It was quite enough to have parted with such a man, who was by far the cleverest fellow in all departments, that he had ever seen, and a woman who really, with all her faults, took all trouble respecting his daughter off his hands’—he ‘ wished he might not yet live to repent it—but Annette he could not and would not part from—it would be cruelty to his daughter.—Much to her credit was it that she had shown no repugnance to the dismissal of those to whom she certainly had great obligations, for she was certainly most highly educated—and now to tear away her waiting-woman, and place a stranger about her, would be to treat her in a manner very unbecoming him as a father, and with very little of that consideration, which he did not doubt her conduct to him would merit.—He should have trouble enough to find another to fill the various situations which that clever fellow had filled in his own person : he did not object to Mr. Meryon’s suggestion of dismissing all those servants who were of the De Quintes’ introduction ; but Annette was not one—and there was no just ground for her being thus punished.’

Mr. Meryon made no reply ; and Lady Heraline returned, with traces on her countenance which required to be talked away. Her imprisonment while the exiles were preparing to depart, was necessary, but Mr. Meryon had the power to prevent its being very painful.

A week of terrible chaos prevailed at St. Emeril's Court, after this stupendous convulsion, during which Mr. Meryon had to sustain, under every discouragement which the peevishness of Lord Lynford and the collecting perverseness of Lady Heraline could give him, all the weight and obloquy, necessary and unnecessary, that could be heaped on him. Had the dismissed pair been within reach, there is no doubt they would have been recalled by the joint acclamation of father and daughter ; but the vicar had taken good care to accelerate their departure by auditing their accounts and adjusting their demands. There was no danger of Annette's conniving at any intercourse between her lady and them, or of their inducing any servants who hoped to retain their places, to forward applications or present supplications. The expelled favourites were too generally objects of hatred to find advocates ; and the shouts of the servants' hall must have proved to them, had they approached the house, how little chance they stood of making their way again into it.

But, whatever her opinion on the subject, it was not without the greatest repugnance that the Lady Heraline relinquished the hopes connected with their delusions. It was not, till she was certified of the truth of what the earl had told her, by their suffering the unfortunate miniature-picture to remain in his possession, that she could entirely withdraw her confidence in the legend appended to it—it was too agreeable to be so easily given up—it was too necessary, too habitual to her, to be abandoned for that solitude of thought to which it reduced her—how was life to be supported?—how was existence to be endured?—It would have been a very rational measure to have at least resolved to consult Mr. Meryon—but this was too regular a proceeding:—it was easier to tell herself that she would go and talk to old John Brown, and this she did, at all opportunities, without any detriment, recommending the good old man very much to the earl's favour, by reporting his sensible speeches.

What might have succeeded to the unfinished romance, who can tell?—Most probably some new one from the brain of Annette, had not her lady most happily conceived for a time, a strong dislike to her, under the persuasion of her having a share in the late events. Lord Lynford was most honourably true to his protection of her,

which perhaps did not increase his daughter's partiality ; and Annette, under that security, exculpated herself fiercely from whatever even *meritorious* imputations, Lady Heraline's peevishness inclined her occasionally to hint, clearly perceiving that no pretensions to integrity, no plea of duty, would regain her favour. She knew enough of her whom she served and studied, to trust herself to 'time and industry' for the wearing off the present impressions, and the substituting for them some less likely to keep herself at this unpleasant distance.

With the change of ministry, of course a change of measures took place. The earl, roused by what had occurred, supported under it by Mr. Meyron's activity and good sense, and furnished with employment by the new arrangement of his household, was soon a renovated creature.—Instead of being lapped in Elysium under the subjugations of Monsieur De Quinte's solitudes—instead of listening to his caveats 'against giving the diminished powers too much to do,' his lordship took the vicar's advice, did what he could, shifted for himself in preference to being assisted, and, in lieu of *calmants* and palliatives, *de l'eau sucrée*, and vegetable messes, he pursued a more generous plan of diet, and found himself the better for it. The sense of benefit brought that of obligation, and a

feeling of reliance ; and Mr. Meryon stood, if not on higher, on firmer ground than ever De Quinte had obtained in his lordship's estimation. His powers of usefulness were not indeed as versatile. The clerical member of an English university could not flavour a ragout, or so well direct the cutting of a collar : he had not correspondencies that facilitated the importation of delicacies ; but he had inestimable substitutes for abilities which could be hired—such as his could *not*.

The vicar was a year older than his patron ; but ten years younger in constitution, though far less robust in original building, and on a less scale.—He had been born a gentleman ; but turned to graze upon the church-establishment, by an imprudent father, whose follies he had veiled, and whose life he had made comfortable, in the most honourable and conscientious manner. He had had his thwartings and vexations—he had had his conflicts and disappointments ; but under them and their consequences, he felt and confessed himself ultimately a gainer. By his filial respect and forbearance, he had purchased the happiness of seeing an unthinking old man brought to his senses—and had closed his eyes in the hope of Heaven's mercy and forgiveness.—By personal endurances, and bitter acquiescences in decrees against which he dared not murmur, he persuaded himself that he had

made an excellent bargain, in obtaining the power of understanding and of consoling the real and imaginary griefs of others. The distress of parents, the martyrdom of disease, the wounds of conscience—all came within his power of comfort; while he kept, as it were, a private bank, from which, with equal charity and accommodated liberality, he could furnish what was requisite to bring the culpable wanderer home again, and even to still the heart and dry the tears of the love-lorn maiden. To guilt, he was majestically severe, as long as he could, by any severity, keep it at arm's length. For those whom he knew zealously engaged in the dire conflict, he fought manfully—he made common cause with them: he was the fellow-prisoner of those in bonds, the fellow-delinquent of those whom sin had unawares surprised; and by his various communications with mankind, he had obtained what may be called such professional knowledge, as placed the cure of many diseases of the mind, which seemed those of the body, under his hand.

Could the good old man, however, now be raised from the dead, he would seem a mere child in knowledge and experience—nay, he might ask himself whether this were the world he had left.—He would say, ‘When I laid myself down to die, I quitted a world which was, and was known to be,

under the management of its acknowledged Maker;—but now, what do I find?—If I may speak so lightly, the workshop of the Great Artificer has been broken into and ransacked; and presumptuous men, ignorant of the use of his tools, and mistaking his materials, are teaching, not only how to imitate him, but how to prove him not worth imitation.—By the establishment of theories and consequences amounting to necessity and fatality, I presume they fancy nothing peculiar to their pillaged Master, but the ability to animate that which they could compose as well as he:—this inability, at present, I see, they are forced to confess—how long they will be so modest, I leave the world to calculate!—Away, away,’ he would have said, ‘with systems that pretend to discover the hidden things of the Lord.—Split mountains, ye geologists!—analyze seas, ye chymists!—dissect bodies, ye guardians of health!—but, for Heaven’s sake, do not pretend to announce, as detected mystery and invariable combination, your own narrow speculations.—Let, at least, the immortal soul escape your presumption—nor make its image, its witness, its surety, the mind, your skeleton.—Tell not your deluded fellow-creatures that truth is not in their Scriptures; and fear by your silly half-witted hypotheses and your misnamed *metaphysic* jargon, to offend against the prohibition of human pre-

judgment.—When He who was confessed by his bitterest enemies, to speak as never man spake, says, “JUDGE NOT,” who shall dare to say, “Hic niger,” because a mouth or nose have a particular conformation, or “All hail!” because a forehead has its “grand elevation?”—‘Experience of the ways of mankind,’ he would have concluded, ‘may give useful power of discrimination, under the aid of memory, or the information of history; but it never was intended by the only-wise God, that a science should be made out of imaginary postulates, imputed *data*, and assumed consequences.’

CHAPTER XI.

IN the new arrangement of the earl's establishment, such a mind as Mr. Meryon's was singularly useful, and he could not but feel and acknowledge with respectful gratitude, the pain he was spared in his wish to execute blamelessly, an office he had never sought, by his lordship's disposition to listen to him. Still more, perhaps, was he gratified by perceiving a daily increase of his influence over the mind and spirit of Lady Heraline, whose sore heart was compelled to seek beyond its own halo of aspirations, the refreshment it needed.

The parent and child were now brought into much closer contact than heretofore; and when Lady Heraline, in her morning-saunter, had chanced to light upon John Brown, and had led him out, by bewitching condescension, to the free use of all his admiring apostrophes, and the unreserved communication of his hardships, his struggles, and his long-decayed powers of manly perseverance, she could meet her father at his breakfast-table, not only with urbanity, but with a feeling of tender consideration, which, in want of its real object, fell in the form of filial affection on him. What

change the re-appearance of one of the De Quintes, leading in the amiable French youth in *bona-fide* existence, might have produced in Lady Heraline's proceedings, can only be guessed—her emotions of tenderness might rather have changed their object, than their nature—she was in love, deeply in love, with she knew not what; and therefore she was almost affectionate towards her parent. Has nobody ever seen this strange effect?—It was when the heart of the ensign had been practised on by the widow that he fell so desperately in love with little miss—Had the widow been out of the way, the ensign had been safe; but the widow was not to be had—she, notwithstanding her blandishments, fortunately for him! soared too high—so he gave his inexperienced heart, which was always looking over its paling for an object, to this little lass whom his imagination decked out in the softest tints of an amatory wardrobe.—And now he has the effrontery to complain, and quarrels with his relations, not because they were deficient in their admonitions, but rather because he would not believe them.

But good is always good; and in the present instance, the father and daughter could not but be happier for these appearances of goodness. The house was yet far from settled—it was under a sort of conventional or provisional government,

which awaited the leisure of the earl to pay his daughter, as he said, 'the respect due to her, by consulting her on his permanent arrangements.'

The consultation began *tête-à-tête*, of course, as in it Mr. Meryon was rather to be talked about than to talk. The earl reported progress, and descanted with very creditable feeling, on the good plain sense of Mr. Meryon, 'who, being a man thoroughly acquainted with the world, was far from offended at the distance to which the plans necessary for the high style of education of a young person of her rank, had, of course, thrown him for a time;' but 'that was now all over, and Meryon would be their firm friend and very useful—as useful as he could possibly be—not, to be sure, the handy fellow poor De Quinte was—*that* they had no right to expect, and could never find in any Englishman—the French were certainly the cleverest people in Europe—*that* he must say—and he was particularly partial to them—he remembered what a clever fellow he once found when he travelled.—dear dear!—how many years ago that was!—he was almost ashamed to say—he! he! he!—but that fellow was courier, valet, cook, every thing.—As for Meryon, he was a worthy creature, and one could not have every thing'—but 'he was now going seriously, while the rain continued—for he should be very sorry to hinder

her exercise—exercise was necessary for all young people—it kept them in health and vigour—and indeed he thought’—(he did not say ‘*therefore* he thought,’ but simply he thought) that ‘he should himself take more exercise, and put himself regularly into the hands of this new Exeter physician, who, by all he could discover in one or two visits, was a very clever man: he concurred with Mr. Meryon in recommending moderate exertion and unfatiguing exercise’—he ‘was sorry to find him an enemy to the storax-pill to which he had so long been accustomed—it had been recommended to him as a very pretty pill—and he thought it had agreed with him very well; but it might, indeed, have latent effects, which drugs sometimes left imperceptibly behind them.’

Lady Heraline looked at the newspaper before her, and pointed out a Devonshire marriage—his lordship stood corrected.

‘We must now,’ resumed he, ‘form some plan of living, while I remain with you—or you remain with me—for I certainly expect great offers for you—and I shall be very ready to meet them.’

Lady Heraline sighed and shook her head.—Of this the earl was too wise, or too cunning—for they are very different things—to take notice: he proceeded—

‘Meryon has made it his request, and I do not think it handsome, just now, to thwart him,

that I would make a sort of—I do not know what to call it—a sort of chapel-establishment in my house, by letting him read prayers; and as he is my chaplain, and I had settled it with him, that he must, as much as he can, be with me—he shall have every accommodation—the house will very well admit of it:—he wishes to have the old form kept up, of saying grace at my table—I shall indulge him in all these trifles, by way, you know, of keeping him in the tact I must have him in; and indeed I can have no objection; for I myself think there is something very suitable to persons of my rank, to have prayers and grace entirely for themselves and their own household.—I have, however, not bound myself, nor you, to a strict attendance—I have said for myself, that if he can wait my time, and I have not had a bad night, I will make one of his congregation in the morning, and in the evening, unless I am *very* much overcome by fatigue:—and I have said for you, that you will do as it suits you, and that I wish you, as much as possible, to be your own mistress.—You are now old enough to be trusted to your own government.’

‘Now,’ continued the earl, ‘on what plan, my dear, would you wish me to make my establishment?—It might perhaps be proper for you to have somebody with you.—I should have told you, indeed, what Meryon said very handsomely of you

on your polite attendance on him at church.—I assure you, your trouble is not thrown away on him.—I told him you had an odd unaccountable passion, or whim, for going to church.—I told him you always had it, and that I never interposed my authority. He talked, as you may suppose, for you know how that description of people are apt to set off when they get on their hobby—he talked about foundation, and fruit, and early good habits, and the Lord knows what,—and I would not stop him—I know him so well!—he was my tutor at college—at the university, I should say—I was of Oxford—an unworthy member, to be sure.—Lord! how many years ago that is!—as I say, I am ashamed to say.—Well! we shall all be old one time or other, if we live so long.’

Now, why did the Earl of Lynford, who was no very egregious fool, though he was perhaps equidistant from the character of a wise man, talk in this silly manner?—His daughter was very far from the least tincture of silliness—it could not therefore be to please her——Why did he talk so?—He did it, because he had points to carry which he had not the independent courage to bring forward at once:—with absolute power in his hands, he was afraid of his daughter—it was, he knew, *she* who bore the lofty mind.—Had he been secure from her opposition by word or look,

he would still have dreaded the instantaneous sentence her rapid judgment must, he well knew, pass on his poverty of spirit; and he was therefore, like the juggler, half whose movements only tend to dazzle and perplex and mislead, popping off squibs and crackers, that she might not ascertain the moment of explosion, which might reduce her to a compelled acquiescence.

But she was not so easily thrown off her guard. She took up the subject from the period in which was contained the acknowledgment of her ability to guide herself, and, as if fearful of retraction, she attempted to rivet his lordship in this opinion by an assurance that, as she considered her education entirely finished, except as she might wish to keep pace with fashion in accomplishments, she would, on no consideration, submit to any thing in the shape of *gouvernante* or *chaperon*. She reminded his lordship that many ladies were wives and mothers when not older than herself; and giving him rather a haughty permission to devolve on whom he pleased, the detail of his housekeeping, she repeated her expectations of her own perfect independence.

The earl perhaps a little misconceived this last branch of her reply; for he met it with a frank and candid, as well as affectionate declaration against a second marriage on his part.—He took

pains to state some of his reasons against it—‘ the difficulty now, of finding a person proper for so important a situation—suited to such a trust as a man so blest in a daughter must repose in a wife ; — the danger of some young woman’s too readily accepting him for a share in his exalted rank, and the participation of a princely income ; and, last of all, and more important than all, his concern for the perfect comfort of an only child, the sole object of his care in this world.’—His lordship concluded by feeling for his handkerchief.

Lady Heraline not only could have laughed, but with great difficulty refrained from doing so, in the least qualified way. Pensive as was the present habit of her thoughts, she could not, with any possible preservation of seriousness, image to herself his venerable lordship leading captive to the altar of Hymen, that indivisible and unalienable property of youth and beauty—some inadequate nymph, all grimace of love and bashfulness, whose pedigree lay scattered in church-registers, and whose maiden-dowry was comprised in her humble wardrobe.—Had the De Quintes been at hand, there might have been a revelry of mirth extracted from the fancied frolic ; but at the existing moment, business was the question, and there could be no retention of the past ludicrous for

the entertainment of the not-yet-smiled-on Mademoiselle Annette.

The colloquy proceeded, as soon as the Lady Heraline could send back her merry ideas to the farthest recess of her brain ; and having settled the one point of independence, she very graciously came into her father's other plans. He proposed to turn over to Mr. Meryon, all sorts of personal trouble, and all responsibility for his comfort—and as a subordinate female must take the same species of ministry in the domestic detail, he, very very cautiously—for here was the point of the forlorn hope—here was the greatest probability of a vigorous repulse—he very gently ventured to commend the unselfishness of good Meryon, in having declared his readiness to part from Mrs. Parr, who had, in a most respectable and respected manner, presided over his little *ménage*, if his lordship thought her more worthy of trust than any one else within his reach.

Lady Heraline certainly started : but when the earl, in addition to her praiseworthy qualities, declared positively against Mrs. Parr's having the smallest control over her *ci-devant* pupil, when he repeated his guarantee of independence to his daughter, she made no opposition. To object to the proposal would have been unreasonable ; and the Lady Heraline might at the moment think,

that the power of exciting the apprehension or the jealousy of Mademoiselle Annette, was not to be despised, if she wished to keep the pert Frenchwoman in her proper place.—At least, unless she had herself had some fitter person than Mrs. Parr to introduce, which she had not, there was no ground for rejecting a woman, in whom she well knew, whatever her deficiencies, confidence could not be misplaced, and who would most obsequiously rid her of cares which both their own nature, and her want of experience, must render annoying and troublesome. Mrs. Parr's admission therefore in a middle rank, neither raising her to the society of her employers, nor degrading her to that of the domestics, was agreed on:—she had a table and a personal servant, with perfect liberty of visiting or receiving her few friends ; and a very liberal stipend was proposed, to which Mr. Meryon, in kind consideration, prevailed on the earl to add a small annuity for her life, in case of his lordship's demise—not enough to make his death a benefit to her, but sufficient to prevent really painful anxiety. Mr. Meryon was to make St. Eméril's Court, as much as he could, his abode ; but at the vicarage-house he was provided with a responsible successor, though of an inferior class, to good Mrs. Parr : his own station was to be at the bottom of his lordship's table.

All this was judiciously arranged and honourably ratified, and Lord Lynford and his daughter were to live like other great folk under the same circumstances. The neighbourly intercourse in their power was to be encouraged, but with the most perfect exemption of the earl from all fatigue of body or mind, and all subjugation to hours and forms; and there was now a fairer chance for the respectability of St. Emeril's Court, and for its owner dying *decently*, than had ever been afforded it.

It would have been uncandid and arbitrary not to allow an experiment of some innovations, before they became parts of an irrevocable code; and consequently his lordship held himself at liberty to reject what he called trifles, if they proved inconvenient or unpleasant to himself.—The first that presented itself in this form, was the half-intention of, as he said, ‘showing himself at the head of his people’ at church, when his health permitted—he did not even wait to ascertain the effect, but he very civilly excused himself, by appealing to ‘the good sense’ of Mr. Meryon, and to his ‘nice perceptions of things as they are,’ when he endeavoured, in a fog of reasoning and a cloud of words, to define the painful impossibility of keeping the attention on the stretch, for so long

a period as that of the church-service—especially, as he justly observed, to a man not used to it. ‘It was not,’ as he remarked, ‘the fashion in his time, for polished men of high rank to attend churches, unless, indeed, some great preacher occasionally drew them without knowing why they went, nor what they went for:—if he had been brought up to it, like other things, it might have become habit; and habit, Mr. Meryon well knew, made every thing easy.’

The vicar very prudently set his perfect acquiescence under a lamented necessity, in the van of his reply. Had he inverted the order of it, he might have had cause to repent his arrangement; but while he admitted every plea of health or infirmity, he thought it his duty to inform the young lady at least, that for the healthy and stout, the bare two hours devoted once a week to the business of bringing our stubborn minds to a sense of their danger, and confessing our want of merit, to imploring the assistance of Him who alone can govern the unruly wills of his sinful creatures, to begging for his worldly blessings, and thanking him for those in our possession, and to hearing how all those concerns of our most important interests may best be furthered, could never be reasonably thought a superabundant allotment of

time. ‘State,’ said he, ‘only what is to be done, and the space of time allowed; divide the space by the various acts; and the fallacy must appear. I grant that, as in the public worship of our friends the Quakers, if the same time were to be passed nearly without the interposition of any active means of performing its duties, and with scarcely the variation of posture, the stretch of demanded attention might be objected to; but to our liturgy it is not a well-founded objection. But there are,’ said he, ‘a set of lively-minded fidgetty people, who never can lend their minds to any thing, or sit quiet for ten minutes together; and to them the impositions of the church must be painful—they scamper through every thing, notice nothing, shrink from all feeling, and complain of every thing as lasting too long.—“What shall we do next?” is their motto—they live in the future, which is again dismissed as soon as it becomes the present; and probably at the close of life—O shame! shame!—reproach their Maker for their want of time.’

Lady Heraline, to whom this was said in whisper, while the earl took a Saturday after-dinner- nap, could say little in contradiction of the vicar’s statement. She did not feel that tedium herself; for her dignity was of a still species; she was not offended.

The next chafing under unaccustomed trammels, was that produced by the attempt to introduce family-prayers, and a Sunday-evening informal exposition of some useful text of Scripture. The earl suffered the former to be established; but in the first instance excused himself. Nor did his daughter, even in all her kind instinct towards the vicar, relish this ‘uproar of devotion,’ as she called it. The ringing of the bell mis-led her, the clatter of the servants into the hall, was disagreeable—‘they were not *very* agreeable company’—‘if the house had a regular chapel, and she her gallery, it would be a different thing. As it was,’ she thought it ‘a form better omitted—the people might be told to always take care to say their prayers, night and morning; and there was no objection to Mr. Meryon’s asking them occasionally whether they did so; but really at present, the day was so shortened by these ten o’clock doings at each end, and if she did not attend herself, it was so inconvenient to her to spare Annette, who being a Catholic, really ought to be excused—and her father could so ill let his men have such idle indulgence, that she must vote for the abolition.’

‘Not for the *abolition*, my good young lady,’ said Mr. Meryon in a tone of regret; ‘we will say *suspension*—a time may come——’

‘ Well, well ! the suspension, if you please : only take care that the culprit hangs out his hour ! ’

She who made this reply could laugh. He who heard it, did not.

CHAPTER XII.

THE pleasant liberty in which Lady Heraline was left by the dismissal of her instructors, prevented her feeling, for some time, the vacuity it produced in her mind. Mrs. Parr was indeed no substitute for the lively information and gipsy-like experience of Madame, but then she had no authority; and Mr. Meryon, by the seeming novelty of his mind, and its utter want of resemblance to any thing that she had met with, was rendered rather agreeable. Foreseeing the trial her patience might have, and sincerely interested even in the cheerful passing of her hours, he gently strove to excite a laudable curiosity, and then to find for it the means of satisfaction.

With untried pursuits, which at once gratified her pride and employed her time—under the new *régime*, which had considerably invigorated her father's general system of health, and abated his local affections—cultivating society so far as to make long morning-visits, to have a young friend or two occasionally in the house, and admitting many against whom the gates had long been shut, or who, in contempt of a lord so lorded, had for-

borne to seek their opening—in short, with all the indulgences of a house so circumstanced, Lady Heraline got pretty well through the following winter. Mrs. Parr not only gave no offence, but revived in the mind of the young lady, much of the fondness which had served to render tolerable the imperious character of her early years, and perhaps unconsciously endeavouring to conciliate the good opinion so necessary to her own comfort, she manifested a disposition so very indulgent, and represented her attachment to Lady Heraline as of necessity so predominant over every consideration, that her ladyship, with all her high pretensions, suffered herself to be flattered, and was not deaf to insinuations, that, at any rate, to keep his lordship's mind quiet, was the grand point to be aimed at.

A pause in her occupations, made by the necessary absence of Mr. Meryon for a fortnight, threw Lady Heraline on herself again, and all recollection of the past being now forgotten, and all connexion with it broken by the violent measure to which she had, in her own opinion very meritoriously submitted, she ventured, after a little prefatory flourish of good humour and blandishment, at the next mention of the De Quintes, to let out a little of what was again fermenting in her mind.—‘By the way, my lord,’ said she, ‘I have thought

many times to ask you to let me copy that beautiful miniature.'

'Pooh, pooh! you had better sit to yourself, for your own miniature—you can never take it at a better time.'

'Oh! but it would be such a lesson for me! it is so beautifully painted! and I really want improvement. Mr. Meryon is very kind in commending my attempts; but still he owns *himself* I am far from excellent.'

Lady Heraline did not dissemble in her lowly self-approbation: she was too proud to be vain.

But all this would not do: his lordship most unfortunately referred her to some *real* portrait for improvement—for he had forgotten, for the moment, his former prevarication: he asked her what was the use of copying a *fancy*-portrait. His daughter was too astute to return his lead without interposition: she coolly asked him if he knew the name of the artist who had painted it.

He replied, 'No, no, not I.'

The petulant repetition of the negative was highly inconsiderate;—had he said candidly and simply, 'No, my dear, I do not,' she would have been far better satisfied.

'If I recollect right, my lord, you said before, that it was the picture of the young Pretender.'

'Did I?' said his lordship, with too much vi-

vacity—‘ I believe indeed I did ; but, my dear child, you must add that to his *pretensions*—you know he was but a *pretender*—ha ! ha ! ha ! You have heard, I dare say, the story of Cardinal York, Harry the Ninth as he wished to be, who, when an English gentleman dined with him, introduced his roast beef with an apology for its inferiority to that of England, by saying, “ You know we are but *pretenders*.” ’

Lady Heraline was struck dumb. She had no power to interrupt her father—he was opening volumes to her view :—she had by far too logical a head to give any applause to the jumble of absurdity about *pretensions* and *pretenders*—she had caught his lordship in a deviation from truth, which her deep interest in it, would not suffer her to consider as a new failure of memory—she saw through the whole—that there was a scheme which she could not understand ; and she had no doubt it was planned against herself. She asked no more for the picture : she would have disdained to make the request : she sunk again into her musings, though endeavouring to wear a face of ease, and rendered now something too much resembling a hypocrite :—all her ingenuity was set at work to deceive her father, because he had deceived her.

A *confidant* was made necessary to her ; and

three days were spent in deliberating whether she should practise on Mr. Meryon, or condescend to make Mrs. Parr her friend, or command the fidelity and obedience of Annette. In the first, her success was doubtful, and a failure might bring most unpleasant consequences—in the second, she had a prospect of success, and risked little—to the third, she had a strong feeling of repugnance. She therefore took the middle course, and accelerated her proceedings, so as to have her mind free, at least from the disturbance of indecision, when Mr. Meryon returned.

Mrs. Parr was easily induced by the laudable wish of a young artist, to contribute so innocently to her ‘improvement,’ which was a word and an idea much on her tongue and in her thoughts, ever since she had been employed about Lady Hereline. She knew no harm—she saw no harm in just using the earl’s keys, for a purpose that could never be made known to him, and by which consequently he could never be disturbed. She had no reluctance to promise secrecy, or to keep her word in so trifling an affair: she therefore, the next time she was intrusted with his keys, to replenish from his perfume-chest the vessels of his toilette—a necessity which she could in her various inspections bring forward—made a small excursion to this private room, and under the direction of

Lady Heraline furnished her with the miniature, saying, with appropriate remark, 'They must all be yours, my dear, one day or other, and God knows how soon ! therefore there can be no harm in your having any of them now.'

Two things would have struck the Lady Heraline's mind at a moment of less pre-occupation—she had positively insisted on Mrs. Parr's entire disuse of all terms of affectionate familiarity in her new situation: she had demanded to be addressed with the most distant respect, to be spoken *of* as 'the Lady Heraline,' and *to* as 'Your ladyship'—therefore the 'my dear' ought to have called up her ready anger. There certainly and evidently exists a strong caveat against the argument that, because after the death of another, we are to possess something, we therefore may possess ourselves of it without the intervention of that contingency, and this Lady Heraline would have felt and exposed; but now her mediatrix was 'dear Goody Parr,' she put her arm round her neck and fairly kissed her, and subscribed by a hearty 'Certainly,' to all her sophistry. As there was no need of disguise where 'dear Goody Parr' was concerned, the unbounded rapture with which the picture was received, might have caused some suspicion that, if what had been told her was not wholly false, it was not the whole truth; but Mrs. Parr was not prone to

doubt, and she imputed this rapture to her ' dear child's' love of improvement, pluming herself, perhaps, not a little, on having originally implanted that taste in her infant mind.

The next solicitude that occupied Lady Heraline, after having descended to impose on a harmless ignorant woman, was to hide her own proceedings from her despicable waiting-maid. Waiting-maids admitted to confidence, as was Annette, are very apt to fancy they have the *entrée* to their ladies' innermost apartments at all hours, and will pout, as did that famous archetype of them all, Sarah Duchess of Marlborough, when *her* puzzled mistress thought it the policy of the hour to play at being awful. But it was too long since Mademoiselle Annette had been a favourite, to resent openly ; and when she complained to his lordship of the *hauteur* with which she was treated, and the superior favours shown to Mrs. Parr, though the earl compassionated her hard case, and was inclined to blame his daughter, a few minutes' conversation with Mr. Meryon induced him to be quiet, and at least to let the candidates make good their separate pretensions for themselves. The vicar did not exactly *say*, but he certainly *thought*, nothing could be worse for Lady Heraline than the friendship of Mademoiselle Annette. Whether he was right, is a

question that cannot be settled till the previous one is adjusted—Whether knaves or fools do most mischief.

‘Cui bono?’—what end will it answer?—would have been the earl’s query to himself, had he ever formed the least intention of divulging the trifling matter of his daughter’s application for the miniature-picture to Mr. Meryon—he had never talked to him about the miniature—he knew nothing of it, but that the De Quintes, in some scheme of selling their pupil, had made use of a picture in his lordship’s collection. That it had ever appeared to make any impression on Lady Heraline’s heart, he had never felt inclined to tell; and to begin now to be confidential on so unimportant a subject, would have been utterly out of place. The matter therefore was sunk in this quarter, however it might rise in another; and by the kindness and policy of her friends, Lady Heraline was most pitiably, though not without fault on her part, suffered to go nearer and nearer to the edge of a precipice, from which she might never find her way back.

How young friends marry, is matter of observation with very young ladies of rank; and how they may chance to marry themselves, occupies not merely a vacant moment of their thoughts. Lady Heraline had for many years been accus-

tomed to discussions of this sort; and in her insulated and commanding situation, habit had made it very familiar to herself and to the earl, to weigh various propositions, and to be ready with a manner to receive or dismiss proposals.

St. Emeril's Court having now for some time been regarded almost as a new acquisition to the neighbourhood, the resort thither of parents to introduce their children, and of young people to be introduced, was increasing, and offers were made and proposals tendered, which were rejected in various ways, on reference to the lady. Once engaged in the bewitching employment of copying the picture, and the still more narcotic occupation of gazing on it, every interruption was unpleasant, and every disturbance annoying. If the earl appeared to interest himself in any application, it was so much the more opposed as making her fear, or rather affect to fear, compulsion; and on this ground she most vehemently set her face against a very eligible connexion, proposed in the handsomest manner by the widow Countess of Winchmore for her son, then abroad, against the time of his coming of age, which was not to be till he was twenty-five. The mutual liking of the parties was made a condition; and nothing but what was fair and honourable, and worthy of a noble family of the highest principle, was in-

tended. The estates were magnificent; their principal seat in an adjoining county—there could be no objection to opening the business, with a view to a happy termination, leaving the young people still at the most perfect liberty—they were not strangers to one another; and all might have ended well; but Lady Heraline pretended—for she was losing the power of being honest—to feel affronted at this ‘bespeaking,’ as she called it, and prohibited all farther mention of his lordship, and ‘his marketting mamma.’

The disappointment to Lord Lynford was, in this instance, serious, and he wished Lady Heraline to see that he felt it; but no testimonial of this sort would have weighed with her in the present state of her mind, or rather of her resentment towards her father. That he had deceived her, was sufficient of itself to provoke her, and render her indifferent to his inclination—but that he had deceived her in a matter which she had made of such peculiar consequence to herself, was what her spirit would in no wise brook. Rumination on the circumstance, only served to set her still farther from him; and the mystery attached to it, the impossibility of getting at that which no one but himself could tell, kept her feelings always in a state of irritation, which nothing veiled, but her conviction that her only

chance lay in keeping him off his guard; had she put him on it, by the least want of self-command or prudence, the door of hope was, she well knew, for ever closed against her—his lordship might ‘die and make no sign.’

CHAPTER XIII.

ONE of the pretty young gentlemen supposed to be candidates for the presumptive heiress's person and favour, and one who seemed the most likely to please her fastidious taste, was the second son of an Irish marquis; his father was known to Lord Lynford, and he himself came introduced and strongly supported by Mr. Meryon's mediation, and with such pretensions as, except in his want of title, atoned for the prohibition of Lord Winchmore's suit. He was a soldier, extremely handsome, of the first class in dress and manners, well-educated, well-principled, of unblemished moral character, and, by the just partiality of his grandmother, prodigiously rich: his temper was such as made him universally beloved, while his noble integrity and independence obtained for him an equal portion of esteem; he had a very cool head and a very warm sensitive heart. He was the Sir Charles Grandison of a former age, the ***** of this; and the Earl of Lynford, if ever he had been in the habit of saying 'Thank God!' would probably have uttered those words, when he hoped that the facilities and encourage-

ments which he had held out to Lord Charles, and the distinctions with which he received him, were fairly leading on to a happy arrangement.

To secure his lordship—to have every reason to think that his family valued and wished for the connexion, were however but two points of probable success ; and the earl might have trembled for the skittish waywardness of his daughter, had he not perceived some unquestionable proofs of a disposition to conciliate the young man's favourable opinion.—Love was no canker-worm in the bosom of the Lady Heraline—she grew fat on it ; —and it was not her fantastical melancholy, or her fancied cause for despondency, that could injure so lovely a form, or so fine a constitution.

Lord Charles's visits, which had at first been made with diffidence and repeated with caution, grew more intimate and frequent, till, at length, they became matters of course, and the day was remarked on which he was *not* seen at St. Emeril's Court, rather than those when he was there.—Excuses were found for this growing frequentation, which saved the different persons concerned in it, from the necessity of confidence.

Lord Charles was extremely attached to Mr. Meryon, and, from his boyhood, in the habit of visiting him, applying to him in all cases where he did not trust his own judgment, and seeking

from a veteran scholar and a classic traveller, that information which he knew enough to value. It was consistent with the politeness of Lord Lynford, or rather with his standing appeal to what became men of his rank, to give Lord Charles all opportunities of seeing his friend, without recognising any change of place in his day-residence; and Mr. Meryon might, under the persuasion that nothing but good could ensue—he *might*, in a sort of parental solicitude for his patron's daughter, add a little more encouragement than he otherwise would have done, to draw him to the house.

Nothing in the conduct of Lady Heraline checked the views of her father or the wishes of her friend. That she strove to please, was evinced even by the compliments she paid his taste—her dress—her pursuits—her sentiments all might be called, in poetic language, ‘redolent’ of Lord Charles's preferences. She had all the little play of love about her; and he could not but perceive, if he chose to perceive any thing, that he was treated by her ladyship as no other *visible pretender* was treated.—This she would have confessed herself, but perhaps with a recondite meaning peculiarly her own.

If Lady Heraline had not lost in some measure that honesty of character which seemed born with

her, the evidences of her favourable sentiments would still farther have convinced or deceived her friends. She must have expressed—for every human heart not entirely vitiated, loves goodness—she must have expressed *some* approbation of a young man so distinguished by nature, and so worthy to wear his high distinctions.—It was not consistent with the pleasure she still took in conversing with poor old John Brown, whose goodness certainly was his only license to entertain her, to pass over, as of every-day attainment, the splendid virtues of Lord Charles. If she felt her heart glow with sympathetic warmth when John Brown described the filial duty and brotherly affection of a son whom he had lost, she ought to have almost worshipped Lord Charles, who was exemplary in his attentions to parents whose affections were too much engrossed by his far inferior elder brother—while he bore, without even allowable resentment, the envious and malignant disposition of that brother, excusing him, as often as was possible, under the plea of excessive indulgence in his childhood, and again apologizing for that, by his claim to tenderness on account of bad health and personal defects. But on Lord Charles's *merits* she never spoke : she contented herself with letting him see that his person, his tastes, and pursuits, were interesting to her ; and though conscious to the supposed intentions of her

father, and the wishes of Mr. Meryon, she seemed to them to be dismissing her waywardness, and gave hopes, however slender, that she might at last settle into rationality.

But her mind was made up, and in a way not at all likely to gratify her friends. She had pictured to her warm fancy, the whole scene up to the moment of its highest interest, and had conned over the terms in which she meant to pronounce the most mortifying sentence. She grew impatient for the crash that was to destroy a solid fabric of hope to his lordship—a house of cards in her estimation—but carried up, as she designed it to be, to a perilous height. In every interview, she now put out a new bait, and seemed to wish him to see, and to be unable to avoid, the hook to which it was attached.—She had drawn him into a correspondence, first on some very trifling occasion, and continued afterwards at greater length, for the sole purpose of exhibiting her epistolary powers, and her exquisitely beautiful hand-writing.—Her letters and notes were *unique*. She had a pretty *badinage* from which she could break off, in a way that left the reader to seek again the resumption of a subject which he regretted her quitting:—on serious topics she wrote with perspicuity and intelligence—she was humble in con-

fessing ignorance, persuasive in her entreaties for information, and grateful for any trouble or thought bestowed on her.—She was—and, alas! this may be said of many more—she was, on paper, all that she ought to have been always, and in all situations.

Four months wore away, and certainly Lady Heraline's spirits were not lowered by the attentions of Lord Charles. She knew now that the matter was got into circulation:—Annette had tried the effect of hinting what she had heard; and perceiving her lady in better countenance towards her next day, had continued to administer the same cure for repelling looks, with tolerable success. Mrs. Parr, in her excessive unwieldy fondness, had, *larmoyante*, congratulated herself aloud to Lady Heraline on this rapturous prospect; and her ladyship had the pleasure of foreseeing that the explosion would be far from private. If she ever asked herself what in Lord Charles's conduct warranted this wanton insolence, she could only have alleged the resentment she owed her father, and might have done justice to Lord Charles's worth and powers, by saying that nothing was wanting to his success, but the unoccupation of her fancy—for heart it would have been almost profane to have talked of—and the earl her father's strenuous opposition.

Excess of attention sometimes renders us inattentive, and the sinister accidents of this life will, in spite of watchfulness and armour, make their attacks at the moments when we least expect them, in forms under which we have the least contemplated them, and in parts which we had thought unassailable.

Impatient as she was to mortify her friends and their favourite, Lady Heraline, in all the inconsistency of persons who never ask a question of any higher oracle than the tyrant Caprice, wished to make the drama hold out a little longer—the miniature had been long since finished, and the original safely restored to its place, without suspicion or discovery; and she might foresee, that if she extinguished the lambent flame of Lord Charles's passion, she might feel the want of the amusement it afforded her. At any rate, she had no desire to part from any thing which served to enliven a mode of existence which, with all that could be done to give it variety, was rather, in her acceptance, to be endured than enjoyed. She therefore repelled her impatience, and having settled her behaviour against the time when her best energies would be called forth, she rested on her oars, and suffered the tide to carry down with it, her ill-constructed bark—improving in tranquillity and external composure in proportion as

she saw reason to doubt whether he, with whom she was thus sporting, had any chance for enjoying the one, or could command as much of the other as would prevent his being very delightfully ridiculous. Hints which he threw out, of an exchange of regiment, by which he might be ordered abroad, made her a little apprehensive of a sudden catastrophe ; but these were so counteracted by hints of many things, deferred till he saw farther—in what way he did not explain—that expectation again went to sleep ; and she could only comfort herself that, if he went, he would have the scene of parting from her to go through ; and as she meant to make his corresponding with her a very urgent request, she knew she could keep all his feelings alive, and have him in good order, when, yielding to increasing impatience, he should seize the first opportunity to return.

All this advantage of the privileged power of giving pain—all this mis-use of too much liberty, was productive of a species of gratification, to which, in some minds, the endurance of disease or the struggles against unmerited misfortune, would be preferable. But Lady Heraline, under the sweet disturbance given to her mind by her insidious teachers, seemed to estimate self-approbation at nothing, and to delight in perversely acting in opposition to it. She had not lost her sense of

right and wrong—no one could decide better, in any case, which did not respect herself; but she still entertained the opinion, that her orbit was in a plane never touching on that of any other celestial luminary.

The accident which she least of all deprecated, was Lord Charles's too soon being aware of his perilous situation; and of this, as she made no *confidant*, there was little danger. But, as it has sometimes happened, that the elaborate character of a forgery has detected it,—in the present instance the extreme solicitude of the deceiver was too evident to escape the observation of the deceived—a young man not so very desperately in love as at all adventures to run the hazard of repentance, and not so very thoughtless as to suppose that, if courtship was successful, matrimony must be felicitous.

It was not at all times possible, even for Lady Heraline, to counteract the second nature given her by education; and that expression of countenance and character of manner which were part of her high distinction, would sometimes betray, towards the earl, something very little like filial consideration, and to her admirer, something that justified the question 'What can this mean?'

CHAPTER XIV.

THIS was the internal polity of St. Emeril's, when one morning a servant approached the Lady Heraline with two letters—one only of which he presented to her, saying, when she seemed inclined to take both, that the other was for Mr. Meryon.

‘Never mind—I am prepared,’ said she, as she broke the seal which she knew to be Lord Charles's:—it was indeed his seal that formed the momentary impediment to her gratification—it was his fine unstudied manly characters, that met her eye in these words:

“My dear M——”

‘Well!’ thought her ladyship, ‘*voilà l'ouvrage de Monsieur Cupidon*—he has written only the first letter of Madam.’—She read on—

“I have at length made up my mind on the subject which has so highly interested, I believe I may say, *both* of us.”

The Lady Heraline felt indignant at this presumptuous article of Lord Charles's creed. She laid the letter down on a table, near which she had been standing. She began to deliberate on the propriety of enclosing it to the writer unread;

but second thoughts are generally cooler, if not better—she was not going, just now, to spite herself—so she proceeded.

“ I cannot describe to you the pain I have endured:”

‘ Come come,’ thought Lady Heraline—‘ he is only, poor soul! in a state of distraction—I think my father is a governor of St. Luke’s—and I’ll furnish the strait waistcoat.’

“ I have not closed my eyes all night.”

‘ Delightful!’ shouted Lady Heraline.—She proceeded with increased interest.—She forgot all causes of offence.

“ You do not, I am sure, suspect me of want of sensibility to the extraordinary combination of great advantages which the goodness of Providence seems to have put almost within my reach——”

‘ No, I give you credit for that—’

“ You do not suppose me blind to charms of person, deaf to the most brilliant powers of conversation, or uninfluenced by the most exquisite grace of deportment and the noblest dignity of manners——”

‘ Thank you, my lord,’ quoth the Lady Heraline.

“ All these are eminently to be found in——”

‘ You might as well have finished your sentence

with "*you, madam, or Lady Heraline Beltravers,*" in the third person—it is the more respectful.'—

"I admit all that you have said to guard me against unfounded prejudice in favour of unimportant circumstances——"

'I am sure I never said any thing of unfounded prejudices—any in *my* favour, I think are tolerably well founded—at least, I believe the world thinks so—'

"I agree with you, that time and tenderness may do much to improve happiness; but happiness, to be improved, must exist to a certain degree—and I really see no prospect of mine."

'Poor soul!—O don't despair!—I have not fired yet, man—and when I do, you shall not linger, depend on it.'

"Now do not imagine I am going to hang my harp and myself together on a willow—but hear me."

'You had better, I think, hang ONE of them, at least.'

"You know my very high opinion of my dear sister—nay, your own has not been less high."

'That's going *a little* too far—the girl is very well, the *woman* I should say—I forgot she's married—and I have the delectable bride-visit to make!—I hate bride-visits.'

"You know the gentle sweet timidity of her

character—you know how justly she might have claimed distinction and applause, when she has, in *true* humility, shunned it.”

‘ I never saw this—but why does the man dash under the word true?—Well, never mind.’

“ You know her devotion to my mother under all the discouragement of her unfortunate irritability—you know how honourably she has promoted domestic union in our family, what sacrifices she has made, nay, what sad returns they have met with—yet, who ever heard her murmur, or challenge what was due to herself?—who ever saw her otherwise than amiable and respectable?”

‘ An exemplification of the fifth commandment I presume—but what is that to *me*?’

“ It is useless to recapitulate—the man who has been so fortunate as to obtain her hand, it is joy to me to be certain will appreciate her virtues. I only wish to call your attention to her conduct towards him while he was her lover, and to compare it with——”

‘ O! O! my lord—now, I suppose, I am to be called cruel by inference and implication.—I do not mind that.’

“ I do not say I have not met with encouragement—without it, you know me well enough to be certain I should not have lingered here—but do you not perceive a mixture of coquetry with

what I suppose I ought gratefully to acknowledge as tenderness, which I do not say *must* but *may* end in my complete mortification, if I am not on my guard."

Lady Heraline began to think :—the blood was not very apt to suffuse her cheeks in more than its due proportion—she was universally firm and steady in strength and spirits, and as little susceptible of the surprise of novel sensation, as of the *gaucherie* of diffidence—but she coloured—and most deeply.—She could not proceed—the letter, for the present, she locked up in her writing-desk, and turned her back on it, to get rid of the painful feeling it had excited.—She even gave orders for her horse to be got ready for her, and intended not to have time to look at the letter again till she had taken her ride.—Annette was in waiting for her change of dress—but curiosity was triumphant; and she resumed the perusal of the letter.

The writer went on to say : "Allowing me to reason by analogy, you will have patience while I ask you two questions.—Do you imagine me insensible to the fault of character as well as errors of deportment, which the least opposition brings out? You may indeed plead partial ignorance; because I have observed that a compliment is paid you when present.—You ought never to be away, if you wish things to go on well.—My second

question is, What can a husband hope where a spirit cannot bend to the age, the infirmities, and the fondness, the doting fondness, of a father; and when he cannot flatter himself that he has influence enough to correct a fault?"

Lady Heraline did not colour now, she turned pale—she shook. She was convinced there was some confusion in what she had before her; but she looked at the envelope, and saw clearly that it was directed to herself.

The necessity of finding out the puzzle gave her power to proceed—but all inclination to go out was gone—she countermanded the horses, and dismissed Annette from her attendance.

‘At all events, I will see the whole,’ said she; ‘I will know all.’—She now sate down fairly to her task.

“How can *I* ever pretend to the authority, the command that a father ought to have? How could I, to a woman who had been so generous to me, and who certainly might marry more advantageously—how could I utter a harsh word, or say, ‘This is my will, and I expect your obedience,’—and were I to attempt convincing, or even persuading, you *must* know how such methods have a chance of speeding.”

‘Shame, shame!’ said Lady Heraline aloud—when she felt herself feeling for her handker-

chief.—The reproof was efficacious, she bade herself go on; and self obeyed.

“ I have tried to indulge myself—I have tried to be blind and deaf to all but one object and one sound, but to no purpose.—I will not feign shame when I say that reason is triumphant over love.”

‘ Perhaps he thinks this of *me* ;—he may suppose the triumph on my side—if so, I shall not let him off quite so easily—I must spin my poor cockchafer a little longer yet. But let me see what my merry-go-round says while he spins—I am almost at the end, thank Heaven! for I am ‘more than half tired.—This is not for *me* I am sure.’

Her ladyship tried to yawn—with this relief, she read on to the end.

“ I flatter myself, in spite of all *your* flattery——”—‘ *I* never flattered you,’—“ that I have interested, sincerely interested, nothing more worthy of regard than vanity—I will not say there was nothing else to interest—this would be unjust—there is so much good sense, that there ought to be good nature; and there *may* be a heart somewhere—but as far as regards myself, I think I am justified in saying, that to enthrall and then reject mine, is the aim and final intention.

“ Under this persuasion, I take my leave, and join the regiment. I will not trust myself in an in-

terview. I write now to the lady, saying that I am called away, and so I am.—I am, my dear Sir,

“Most faithfully yours.

“P. S. You shall hear from me soon.”

‘In the wrong envelope!’ exclaimed Lady Heraline; ‘I am sure it is so—this is to Meryon.’

Her head turned, and she threw herself on the sofa; but presently her immediate concern was uppermost in her recollection: she crushed the letter and the envelope together, and lighting them on the inner hearth, had seen the last spark on the paper-tinder expire, when Mr. Meryon came in quest of her, and with his usual simplicity of manner, said, ‘Lady Heraline, I fancy Lord Charles has made some mistake: he has put a note, evidently designed for *you*, into a cover directed to *me*—I could not avoid reading your billet; but there is no secret in it: he cannot be at your music-party, for he is called to join his regiment that is going abroad.—Had you any note that ought to have come to *me*? he appears to me to have made a mistake in inclosing the notes. Your man says you had a letter by Lord Charles’s messenger, and, that he gave you yours first.’

Without this last sentence, Lady Heraline in her present mood would undoubtedly have taken refuge in a negative; but as the affair stood, this

was impossible—she therefore replied, that she had had a note from Lord Charles, telling her what he had told Mr. Meryon, and that, having read it, she had burnt it, ‘and there were the ashes.’

There were ashes more than could have been accounted for in this way, but the old gentleman did not put on his spectacles ; and to suspect what had occurred, would have been almost equal to the perpetration of it.

Mr. Meryon retreated, saying to himself, ‘It is very odd.’ The note followed its murdered companion, and Lady Heraline sate down and thought.—She fancied it thundered, but it was not very probable, as the day was cold—she called Annette—then sent her away—she asked where Mrs. Parr was, and then said there was no occasion to seek her:—to her father or Mr. Meryon she had no desire to betake herself, just now. Not knowing what to do, she did nothing, but sate down by herself, and—most appalling company ! *with* herself:—she was compelled to commune with her own heart and be still.

The apostle of the Gentiles has well designated human nature as, in every individual, comprising two wills. It was Lady Heraline’s one will to brave all the disgrace which she had brought on herself ; but, contrary to the experience of St. Paul, the better will seemed to predominate ; for

the remonstrances of her own heart, though it reiterated pulsations of one tone and measure, were loud as any voice of reproof, and under the testimony of herself alone, she stood convicted, confronted, and abashed. No spirit of defiance, no exertion of courage, no shield of right, no palliation of falsehood, could avert or conceal from her the sense of being defeated, foiled, over-reached, and despised. Nay, in the perversity of her distorted judgment, she now began to see the loss of Lord Charles as a misfortune—she fancied she had loved him—she thought she could have been happy with him, and proud of him—she *must* have respected him, and she *might* have been brought to obey him. The miniature in her bosom was scarcely of potency to overcome any part of this retrograde feeling—it was losing its influence under confronting reality; and she almost wept when she asked herself, where was a substitute for it and for Lord Charles, when in the same instant both of these failed her.

Such sufferings were too acute to be endured, without some effort either to render them useful or to overcome them. The former purpose might be best worth the trouble; but the latter was the more convenient, and Lady Heraline unfortunately determined—‘to think no more on this horrid business.’—She generally succeeded in what

she determined on ; and her expectations from herself were not, in this instance, disappointed. She ran certainly some risque of what Lord Charles's next letter to Mr. Meryon might produce ; but though there was nothing to rely on in that case, but good fortune, hers had so often befriended her, that she could almost plead prescription in her claims on it. She had turned in her mind a negotiation with the servants, to make them recognise any such letter, and to bring it to her ; but as Lord Charles, even if he was in England, was not himself in parliament, he would probably write under cover to the earl ; and it was going rather too far to break open her father's letters. A few days levelled all the chaos produced in her mind, and restored the miniature to its full powers of consolation. Whatever the sentiments of Lord Lynford and Mr. Meryon on her supposed lover's departure, they forbore naming him in her hearing ; and with the expedient of denying herself for some mornings, that she might not be persecuted with wonderings, remarks, and inquiries, till she could make due replies, she placed herself in her own opinion just where she was, when his departed lordship was not the frequent visitor he afterwards became.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. Meryon's tenderness of manner towards Lady Heraline after this event, had increased, as if he thought she claimed pity for some unkind treatment; and he was assiduous in finding agreeable employment for her mind, as if he feared dejection might overspread it. It was impossible, had she been so inclined, to notice this, even by grateful acceptance; but Lady Heraline was not much troubled with grateful feelings—she stood too high to be sensible that any body condescended to her. What then was her astonishment—what was her dismay, when this gentlest of all human beings—this most charitable of all judges—this conscientious servant of a meek and lowly Master, whom he with every faculty adored, with every feeling loved, and with all possible exactness strove to imitate, as far as human imperfection is allowed—when this man, uniformly her friend and often her advocate, and overflowing with tenderness to her sex and its foibles, entered her *boudoir* without ceremony, his brows knit, his open forehead disturbed with dark clouds, his cheeks suffused,—and to her sight taller than ever, and to

her conscience more awful than ever, in a voice which she did not know to be his, demanded from her the letter to which one in his hand referred.—Like the obstructed beast of the prophet, she would have encountered the harsh proximity of any wall, to escape,—but she could not submit to lie down: she turned again and faced her enemy, and now, instead of denying or falsifying, she asserted her right to destroy as she had done, that which related only to herself, and which was injurious to her.

The question of right was not disputed, but it was not conceded—it was waived in favour of a superior concern—that of telling Lady Heraline Beltravers, in a manner very little accommodated to her pride or her saucy spirit, truths such as no one else would tell her. Lord Charles had transmitted an abstract of his letter, and Mr. Meryon made it a text-book for the most painful exertion of his affectionate authority, that had ever been demanded from him. In vain the young lady fired into rage—in vain she went to the door to call for rescue—in vain she flew to the bells—in vain she stamped—and, more marvellous than all! cried with passion—in vain she threatened hysterics and her father's displeasure, and seemed on the point of choking. Mr. Meryon, old as he was, and subservient as she might deem him,

was, without the smallest departure from respect or decorum, too powerful for her:—he was before her in every advance of foot—with a finger he put by all her outrageous movements—he tried no means to soothe her while she was in this ferment—he threatened withdrawing from the house—renouncing all concern for her—and the revelation of the cause: he set at nought her pride while he gave due honour to her rank, and treated her pretensions to distinction with the most mortifying contempt, while her real distinctions were most candidly acknowledged. Instead of consoling her by setting off her merits against her faults, or her talents against her waywardness, he considered her claims to commendation only as pledging her to a better conduct, and her natural endowments as taking away all excuse for her failings. He lamented sincerely, but without giving her the advantage of knowing what it cost him, that the office of correcting her should fall into *his* hands—he gave her the option of himself or the earl for her judge—in choosing himself, he assured her of the most honourable secrecy—in appealing to her father, he would promise nothing in her favour:—exposure, and of the harshest kind, should certainly attend her disregard of the more merciful option: he had no motive for the trouble he was taking, but her most essential advantage—he con-

sidered her as a mere child, on whom punishment was much more profitably bestowed than indulgence; and till he could subdue her spirit to the authorizing him to tell Lord Charles, not that she had been guilty of so dishonourable an act, for that he would never ask, but that she had seen his letter, and resolved to profit by his reproof, he would not desist from his endeavour to spare her, by timely repentance and amendment of her many faults, the bitter bitter self-reproach with which he must rather hope than fear, her future life would be attended. ‘He did not,’ he said, ‘demand all this at once—he asked for nothing at present, but this concession and the wish to amend:—weeks, months, nay years, if it pleased God to grant him years—he would wait to see this indispensable work perfected. He only begged permission to assist her. Would she make him as much her confidant as he was her friend, he could perhaps abate the painful conflict, and shorten her labour: he would watch over her mind as a physician would do over the uncertain health of a patient—she should have every encouragement to subdue her faults one by one; and he would promise her in a very short time that peace which the world could neither give nor take away.

It was at present preaching to the waves: she was exhausted in bodily powers; but her spirit

was unconquered : she still asserted her right, as an object of worship to the other sex, to treat them as she best liked or thought fit ; and not at all sparing the earl in her rapid animadversions on her situation, gave perhaps a worse portrait of herself than her corrector could have imagined a likeness of her. She, at length, finding nothing gained by this, so far gave way, or *finessed*, as to beg for forbearance at present, and to promise to *think*,—her manner of doing both which gracious acts of condescension, did not pledge her for much.

Being released by the departure of her tormentor, she meant to have felt comfort in her freedom, and was disposed to rejoice in being again alone ; but solitude is not made for such turbulent spirits ; and as soon as she had cooled herself, she cast about for a companion. Her father, fortunately, was not just then inclined to admit her ; he was in his *poorly* state ; and, from some hints let fall by the vicar, there was ground to suppose this awkward and sudden disappearance of Lord Charles, had done him no good. The young man, had not been wanting in respectful civility : he had contrived to offer a five minutes' visit of adieu, when he knew, indeed, that it would not be accepted, and had followed it by a few lines of acknowledgment ; but this was neither agreeable nor

satisfactory ; and in Lord Lynford's situation, the whole was particularly grievous. To see his daughter therefore, for whom and his pride, he felt the circumstance in all its force, was not desirable ; and as little desire had she to exhibit herself to him.

Mrs. Parr was too much indebted to Mr. Meryon to allow of seeking consolation from *her*, even by a general statement of undefined aggressions on his part ; and Annette, though smiled on, when she could make imaginary good appear still better, was no resource in affliction. Mr. Meryon had replied to her request for forbearance, by a recommendation which he might think would call up a smile, or in some other way be useful,—to go and talk to her favourite, John Brown : she indignantly rejected the banter with a muttered expression of contempt that did not escape him—but he had just then no ears for that insolence which must have drawn added suffering upon a sufferer.

Left then to herself, she could only resolve more firmly than ever, to follow her own will, and this, in the first instance, led her to do what she had been advised to do, and in effect refused to do. She walked out for air ; and while she was telling herself she would avoid John Brown, she went to seek him : but there was no harm done—the old

man, indeed, bowed, and spoke as she had encouraged him to do ; and he began to thank God for fine weather, and prospects of plenty ; but the charm of his garrulity was vanished : he was now presuming and impertinent ;—and she was freezingly silent : he perceived, as he continued at work with his lawn-rake, that her foot moved to go :—looking up to make his bow, he was struck with the disorder of her countenance : he shook his head and said, ‘ Ah ! God bless you, my lady !—I pity you ; for I know what it is—I was once young myself ;—but I hope it is n’t as they say. They says he was quite, as one may well think, broken-hearted—and now he’s gone to the wars.—I hope no offence, my lady,’ continued he, throwing off his hat, dropping his rake, and joining his hands :—‘ I hope no offence—I would only speak afore it is too late—I hope you did not turn him off in unkindness—for if you did, I would not be you—you’ll repent it, dear dear lady, to the latest hour of your life—do, do, let him come back again—you do not know half how good he is. As to t’ other lord, beyond seas, one would n’t much mind—you had a good right to do as you pleased there ; but Lord Charles, every body thought of, and talked of, and you seemed going on so well together—do let him come back—he will make a good husband, and a good master, or my name isn’t John Brown.’—

Her ladyship walked away in very ungracious silence.

It was necessary now to prepare for dinner, and she decided on a perfect tranquillity of manner, such as should give no offence to her father, or increase Mr. Meryon's 'spirit of bitterness,' as she called it, against her. She appeared subdued into placidity, which, however remarkable, absorbed as the earl was in his own concerns, did not excite his curiosity, while, to the vicar, it gave hopes of progress in the task which he had set her.

But when Mr. Meryon had left the table, Lady Heraline, if cunning is worse than unpremeditated evil, was guilty of an act still more deserving of punishment than that which had so disgraced her.—She reported to the earl her having just seen and conversed with poor John Brown, as he was raking the lawn in her garden. The subject of the conversation was not demanded, neither was it reported: she spoke of the old man with tender concern, and suggested to her father, as a due consideration for her client, and as a favour done to herself, the charitable expediency of relieving him from his daily labour, and by assigning him a weekly stipend, allowing him to live in peace and comfort in his cottage. Lord Lynford, to whom, perhaps, the matter was of perfect indifference, seemed gratified by the opportunity it af-

forded him of obliging her ; and she had full power granted her to consult John Brown's comfort in any way most agreeable to her sense of his merits. The thing was very specious, and to every judgment but her own and—One far above it,—it must have appeared highly in favour of the poor old man ; but Lady Heraline knew that the seeming permission to live in his cottage, was virtually exile from every thing that varied the monotony of his life—it precluded him from wholesome labour—it separated him from that which flourished under his care—it destroyed his importance—it reduced him to the rank of an alms-man ; and it might probably shorten his days. Of these consequences she could not be ignorant ; and though she did not recount them when she resolved on pleading his cause, she did not exercise that consideration of them, which justice demanded, or a well-kept conscience would have prompted—her view was to get rid of a censor ; and very ready means being at hand, she scrupled not to use them, reserving to herself the secret of their ultimate tendency.

To punish or to pinch the poor man was no part of her intentions : she obtained from her father's generosity the continuance of his full wages, and was commissioned to inform him of the arrangement, in a manner that showed it was de-

signed and understood as indulgence. She did not say, that, feeling it a disagreeable office, she should use a deputy, but she had not the courage—effrontery would be the more descriptive term—to perform the treacherous embassy herself.—It did not press ; therefore it was deferred.

And now came bed-time—the hour of repose to some, of thought to others, and of bitter reflection to many, whose day makes no provision for it.

She could not sleep—she could not think—for it was neither sleeping nor thinking, to fancy Mr. Meryon still speaking, and herself still trying to escape from the intimidating sound of his voice. She was compelled, by this sort of haunting, to recollect Lord Charles, and the offence his letter had given her.—Pride saved her from repining anew at that which she had brought on herself ; but it barred the access to all wholesome regret. She was too much irritated to perform any part of the promise, given or implied, which the vicar had extorted from her :—her present feeling would have induced her to behave rather worse than better, if ever the opportunity offered ; and above all, she condemned as the most degrading weakness, the idea of profiting by the hints of his lordship or the severe admonitions of his friend. She could very firmly decide on considering *herself* in what-

ever she might think fit to do, but to bring herself to consider, was less easy ; and however unwilling she was to confess that Lord Charles had the smallest influence over her, scalding tears came, at least to the very threshold of her eyes, when she called to mind the degradation to which the man whom she designed to use ill, had reduced her.

She passed the night without sleep, and rose next morning in a fever ; but as it is in the later stages of inflammatory disease that the spirits sink, hers were not at present subdued. She gave orders to the head-gardener to inform John Brown of his lord's kind consideration of his services, and congratulated herself on having despatched one unpleasant task. Something not very clear to her own perceptions, made her avoid the looks even of the person she charged with this apparently agreeable commission—but when she had given it, she was alarmed by the perfect silence with which it was received—the gardener, however, retreated ; and now she was, in her own imagination, safe.

But the man returned after a few minutes, and very respectfully begged her to represent to his lordship, that what he was doing with the kindest intention, would, he feared, not be so accepted by the person on whom the favour was conferred. John Brown was neither greedy nor lazy—it was his joy to work, and his pride to keep her garden

in order—the double of his wages would be less valued by him than permission still to dig and hoe, and mow and rake, at his ease.—‘ I always leet him do his wark in his ain way, my leedy,’ said the Scots gardener, ‘ and it is always doon, and better doon than the ithers do thairn. He is the father of the grounds ; and I reelly dinna ken hoo, my leedy, bigging yer paredon, to till him he is to gi’ o’er coming amaingst us. He ’ll sairtainly think he ha’ iffended ye.’

Lady Heraline thought she had only to sweeten the unpalatable potion with a few honeyed words ; and these she liberally bestowed, begging that John might be assured of her regard, and of her intention to come and see him frequently at his cottage—which being only a mile off, and entirely out of her walks and rides, was, as perhaps the gardener thought, ‘ vary leetle leikly to taimpt sic a fine leedy till it.’

Gentle perseverance, however, carried the point ; and the gardener again retreated, very far from satisfied, if his looks and movements were to be trusted.

Breakfast was over, and Lady Heraline was planning her day, when crossing the hall to the library, she heard sobs and murmurings, and the voice of some one trying to soothe and give comfort.—She could not be uniformly and consist-

ently hard-hearted.—Nature had not made her so.—She looked to see what was the distress ; and any but that which it was, might have moved her ; but it was John Brown, supported by the gardener, and coming to beg that he might not be dismissed. She was startled, and for a moment thrown off her guard—her first impulse was that of pity ; and she was very near doing what she ought to have done :—but John Brown, in his supplication, saying, ‘ I am sure, my lady, and nothing will ever make me not sure, that I displeased you yesterday by what I said—and meant no offence neither ’—she could not, because she would not, deny that she was displeased ; and therefore the shortest way was to persist in her injustice. She was, or affected to be, angry ; and in spurning her former favourite, she communicated to him the indignation and the firmness he needed. Rising from his suppliant posture, and shaking his head and arm, as he turned from her, he said, ‘ A long long lane, my lady, will you have to tread back again before you get into the way to heaven.—I am a poor old man, and your father’s almost useless servant, but I won’t be turned off in this sly way, as if I had stole something, and you was too good to take the law of me :—I’ve told you my mind—and now you have your choice—when you did not know it, you might say something for yourself, but now this is what is called revenge—

and what did I do to deserve it?—only asked you not to make yourself miserable.’

Altercation with so low a dependent, ill suited the dignity of the lady; and as she had the resource of retreating, by pursuing her way, she took advantage of it, and sheltered herself in the library, which, to her great comfort, she found free for her to enter—for Mr. Meryon was not there.

But she rejoiced without cause, in her escape of one whom she now dreaded to see. Mr. Meryon had been stopt on his way to the library, as she had been: and John Brown had closeted himself with the vicar, to whom he was then telling his tale, with somewhat more of effect than it had produced on his mistress. The old man, from mere instinctive delicacy, would not avail himself of the credit he might have derived from the appearance of the gardener as his protector: he thought it perhaps necessary to his success, to tell how he conceived he had offended: but he might feel that he had no right to divulge to a third person, that which respected his lady.

It was not, however, as yet, his good fortune to meet his due reward. Mr. Meryon paid Lady Heraline the compliment of withholding his belief: he could not suspect John’s integrity and honest meaning; but the clearness of his ancient intellects, he a little questioned, when he heard

him alleging as a reason why he was to be punished munificently, his having presumed to say a word to his lady about Lord Charles. The story was, all together, too incredible and too absurd to be believed : and the vicar hearing which way Lady Heraline had taken, bade John follow him, and sought her.

It was a new call on her courage ; and she was determined to make it answer it. When Mr. Meryon had opened the business, she did not attempt to deny what the man said, but she contended that his construction of an act of goodness into a desire of revenge was unfair.—On this point Mr. Meryon was quite as good a judge as she could be ; and having duly considered the question and heard the parties, he in his heart, and to the grief of it, decided against the lady. He kept this opinion to himself, while John was present : he endeavoured to excuse what had happened, as a too hasty supposition that what was desirable to one, must be desired by all ; and bespeaking John's patience till the next day, he tried to restore Lady Heraline's credit by inducing her to convince the man of her perfect freedom from any vindictive feeling ; but she was now past persuasion, he was therefore compelled to inform Lord Lynford of John's preference of servitude ; and in this way, without betraying her, the matter was ad-

justed. But by adding fresh exasperation to her ladyship's ill-temper at the time, it destroyed all hope and prospect of any submission in the former case, and threatened to render her incorrigible. John Brown was restored; and she did not dare prohibit his working in her garden—she had a remedy: she could avoid the spot, or if of necessity she went thither, she was under no obligation to speak to him. They talked no more; but John bowed, and whispered his blessings and prayers.

Little more intercourse was there now between Mr. Meryon and Lady Heraline—she would accept no assistance, she would enter into no conversation. Her confidence in his abused good nature, enabled her to behave with ease to her father, and to affect a cheerfulness in his presence, which hid from him the distance to which she had thrown the vicar. To him St. Emeril's Court was now made very unpleasant: he got away from it as much as he could; and Lady Heraline was still further soured by the increased trouble his frequent absences occasioned her, in assisting Lord Lynford in the laborious task of amusing himself:—but still she was far too proud to wish for Mr. Meryon, or to court his favour by any undertaking to be wise.

Unwilling to give her up, he next tried the effect of a temperate remonstrance in writing—to no purpose:—he constructed a sermon in such a way as to leave her room for application—all served only to make the matter worse, and the breach wider. He resorted to the expedient of alarming her, by a short note decidedly threatening her with an appeal to the earl. She replied to it by a few words of defiance—and thus, if such a victory was worth obtaining, she might glory in being victorious over him whose far better spirit, nevertheless, in no small degree controlled the lord of the mansion. It is a most disgraceful power which is too often assumed by those least fit to govern—and perhaps it is one of the hardest lessons, short of those of calamity, which we are commanded to get by heart, which is contained in the instructions to wait and see the end of such power.—Not to wait—not to endure, and still more speciously than all, not to encourage evil by the toleration of it, is the counsel of the world :—to wait—to endure and to trust to Him who can best avenge us, is the better advice of the Gospel ; and by this was Mr. Meryon's proceeding regulated—still bearing in mind that supineness was not Christian moderation, and only waiting his opportunity to bring this untoward girl to her senses.

CHAPTER XVI.

SOME weeks had now elapsed since the departure of Lord Charles, whose arrival on the Continent the papers had announced. The neighbours all round had paid visits, and Lady Heraline had passed triumphantly all the plough-shares which she knew were laid for her. For the bride-visit to his sister, she had put on a little more of the unamiable than usual, and had civilly sneered and sarcastically complimented-out twenty minutes to her own satisfaction. But now came something rather more serious.

Mr. Meryon, having with very proper and necessary spirit declined the sacrifice of his time in reading with her, as he had for some time done, had arranged his attendance at St. Emeril's into stipulated periods, and had his times for coming thither and departing. The change was in every way very unpleasant to her: it mortified a new species of pride, which he had excited by showing her how many rounds of even the female ladder of learning, she had yet to mount, if she chose to survey at leisure, and with an informed eye, the prospect it affords. She knew she

had the recovery of this indulgence in her own power : she knew she had only to say, ‘ I have done wrong,’ to recall him to that delightful intercourse and welcome drudgery, which filled the best hour of her day, and the satisfaction of which no one could have appreciated more than she herself. But, still obstinate, she would not yield even to her own laudable inclination. Unable, however, to rest in quiet ignorance, she tried to carry into effect a *bravura* which she had intemperately uttered to him towards whom it was most indecorous ; and constituting herself her teacher, she endeavoured to proceed on her small stock of acquired knowledge ; but pitiable would have been her situation had she been reduced to it by any but herself, when involved in a maze of doubts and indefinite perceptions, without the power of satisfying the one or ascertaining the other, while she bit her lovely lip to suppress the treachery of her sorrow, she closed her books as a dead letter to her.—Those, and those only can feel for her, who have panted for knowledge without the power to obtain it—who have wandered in a labyrinth beyond which they saw a heavenly country, and have found no friendly hand to extricate and guide them.—Neither can any but persons so tried and so schooled, appreciate at its full value, the generous liberality of an unpaid teacher, who, not in

the consciousness of his own intangible superiority, but with a disposition even to yield it, if by yielding he could confer it, was binding himself to a task, over which he had often sickened, and, accommodating himself to the natural character of female intellect, was trying to make a scholar out of a lady.

In the fever of her mind, or rather of her temper—for it is too solemn to attribute *mind* to any thing so childish—she reckoned at nothing, the injury which she was doing herself. She despised his prophecies of the mortification she would have to endure, when, arrived at the *acmé* of the blessings with which she was surrounded, she saw others on whom no such claims could be made, superior to her—she deafened herself against all the arguments to which she had heretofore gladly listened as excuses for the gratification of her love of distinction, by which he had convinced her of the different cultivation of the mind, which should attend on different situations. He had represented cases in which a merely elegant education would suffice for one of the many daughters of a large family, but not for her who was to take the place of a male-heir in an exalted house. He had convinced her : he had stimulated her ; but now she was almost ready to deny that she had ever, on any subject, adopted his opinions.

But this artificial temperament could not be made permanent:—she did not submit, but she cooled; and common sense having obtained a hearing, she could not continue the imposition on herself. — Still she persisted, and finding the striking of the clock at the wonted hour of her lesson, unpleasant, she took an admirable method to stun this sense—she contrived to volunteer her services to read the news-paper to her father!!—A fine substitution!—a brave equivalent!—but, to be serious, not at all worse than many others daily adopted.—Is giving up comfort for splendour—health for pleasure—female character for fine clothes, at all a better bargain than Lady Heraline made, when she gave up the *Iliad* for the contents of the *Morning Post*?

But even this daily record was not destitute of historical events and interesting facts—she read on, with little concern and less caution—War was the state of Nature at the time; and the aggressions and oppressions of those who conducted it, were to her less than the moves of a chess-board.—She had got deep into the abstract of some not-yet-officially-received intelligence, when she found herself reading of the slaughter of the regiment into which Lord Charles had exchanged—and saw, in the next lines which she was to articulate, that he too had fallen!

Before she could arrive at the words containing this direful *finale*, she paused—and in a deep tone ejaculated—‘ Murder ! Murder ! ’—Utterly powerless, but neither fainting nor falling, she slipt down from her seat, and remained in a heap upon the carpet.

The doors about the apartment were open, and a servant passing near, heard the words, and looking in, was ready to attend to Lord Lynford’s tremulous cries for assistance.—She was raised from the ground, and laid at her length on a couch—her eyes were fixed; and she continued iterating the word ‘ Murder,’ more and more faintly, till it died away in the air: her eyes closed; and it seemed as if her exclamation referred to herself.

The earl’s situation was agonizing—it had stunned him into stupefaction—but when he saw the stare of the servants, who had collected to assist their lady, directed at once to him, and felt himself standing like a stag at bay, while mouths, as well as eyes, seemed ready to open on him, he so far recovered as to ask the question, which he well might have been asked, ‘ What is the matter ? ’

In this terrible moment, that compliment was paid to Mr. Meryon, which is seldom withheld from the useful, however out of favour they may chance to be—Lady Heraline, to the satisfaction of the attendants, and the inexpressible joy of

her father, revived, and in a low voice desired that Mr. Meryon might be sent for.—She was obeyed; but the messenger had no commission to account for his embassy—he could only say, as in all such cases, that ‘her ladyship was very ill.’

The vicar came immediately; and by that time, Mrs. Parr had removed Lady Heraline to her dressing-room, and Lord Lynford had braced himself with the panoply of his medicine-chests. The first introduction was, of course, to his lordship; but from him no satisfaction was to be gained—it needed almost the talents of an Old-Bailey cross-examiner, to get out a single fact. The earl was so taken up with his own feelings, imaginations, suppositions, apprehensions, and auguries of fatal consequences to himself from the shock, that he could not describe the circumstances of his daughter’s seizure; and when he had just arrived at the fact, he skipt over it, to the contemplation of his own hardship in being looked on by his own people, ‘almost,’ as he said, ‘as if he had been the cause of the death of his own child.’—he was convinced that, ‘for some moments, they fancied he had killed her.’

‘What, my lord, could occasion any thing so out of all possibility?’

‘Why, her crying out, “Murder, Murder!”’

‘But did she do so?’

‘ Yes, repeatedly.’

‘ And what occasioned that ?’

‘ I cannot tell—she was reading.’

‘ Was she reading when she cried out so ?’

‘ No, she had stopt, which I wondered at, and then it was, as I say, that she fell.’

‘ Your lordship had not told me that she fell.’

‘ O yes : she fell down as if she had been shot.’

‘ What made her do so ?’

‘ I cannot say—she was reading.’

‘ What was she reading ?’

‘ The news-paper.’

‘ Show me the paper, if you please.’

The paper was brought.

‘ Can your lordship show me the part that Lady Heraline was reading ?’

‘ I can tell you—it was this shocking account of the regiment that, they say, is cut to pieces.’

The vicar mounted his spectacles, and soon found the paragraph.

A few low words—his dismounting his spectacles—and the quivering of his lips, told that he too had his feelings on the occasion.

‘ We must be ourselves, my lord,’ said he—
‘ and remember who it is that appoints these things.’ Then seating himself by the earl, and taking his hand with the respectful affection of his

relative situation, and his truly kind heart—he said, ‘I do not wonder at any thing now——Lord Charles is gone.—If you can spare me, I will go to her ladyship—she may feel it more than we suppose.’

‘Just stay, one minute—just one minute;’ said his lordship, in a quivering voice—‘I am so shaken!—God bless my soul!—gone—do you mean fallen?—killed?’

‘Yes, certainly; and grieved we must all be—but God’s will be done!—I grieve for his poor sister.’

‘Well but *my daughter—my daughter,*’ said Lord Lynford; for it must be owned, next to himself, she was his first care—and called anew to his recollection, by the mention of Lord Charles’s sister.

With constructive permission, the vicar went to see how it fared with Lady Heraline.—And here ensued a scene, for which, not even he, with all his experience of the world, and power of prognostication, was prepared.

Lady Heraline had been sitting in an arm-chair: Mrs. Parr, Annette, and the upper female servants of the house, were round her. As Mr. Meryon entered, she dismissed them, and then rising, in the native ease and dignity of her manners, when her mind was freed from the incum-

brance of her artificial interests, she came forward to the vicar, saying, ‘Mr. Meryon, if I did not know your merciful disposition to be equal to your sense of justice, I should not dare to look at you.’

‘Sit down, my dear young lady,’ said he, taking her hands and moving her towards the chair—‘sit down—but do not, I entreat you, make use of such unmerited expressions of confidence in me—they are fit only for your Maker—He alone is merciful—He alone is just—I know what has occurred—and I grieve for you :—I come to meet your feelings, whatever they are ; I hope and trust they are *now* such as I can join in.’

‘If they are not, correct them.—My spirit is for ever broken—I am a sincere penitent for all my folly and wickedness :—the punishment,’ said she, stretching down her arms and locking her hands, as in complete self-abandonment—‘the punishment is severe—severer, I hope, than was quite necessary.’

‘Hush’—said Mr. Meryon—‘not a word of murmur—nor of justification—I am not come hither, my dear Lady Heraline, to flatter you, even at this moment :—what I have said to you heretofore, I still think, and should repeat, could it do good ;—but this is no time for harshness—“the

bruised reed," *I* remember, "is not to be broken"—"the smoking flax is not to be quenched:"—may it kindle in your heart, like fire on the altar, and make it an acceptable holocaust to Him whom you have offended !'

'Is it so serious?' said Lady Heraline, in quiringly.

'Undoubtedly,' replied the vicar. 'Trifles light as air in the scale of our biassed self-love, may be heavy as lead to the discernment of an impartial judge.'

'O do not be so severe—pity—pity——'

'Can you call me severe? Am I severe, when I see, in silence and sorrow, young persons, whom I would put in the path to heaven, running contrary to all my endeavours?—or when I gently warn them that small faults may arise from enormously bad motives?—that things which they laugh at, and glory in, they ought to weep for, and be ashamed?—or am I severe, when I try to persuade the profligate, that sudden death may be eternal perdition to them? Ah! my dear Lady Heraline!—you are not the only one, by many, for whom my heart has ached; nor can you want for abettors in calling me severe or unkind.—All I can say in my defence is this, that if to wish with all my soul, the happiness of the deserving, and

the reformation of the undeserving, be severity and unkindness, I am, I hope, one of the most severe and unkind of human beings. Were I mad with the riotous, and licentious with the lawless, I should, at least, have the praise of good-nature, and I might be ranked amongst this world's most liberal-minded, warm-hearted sons;—but what should I have to say, when He, to whose service I have dedicated myself, imputes it to me, as he did to Eli, that in not endeavouring to oppose iniquity, I have made myself an accomplice in it?—Now, Lady Heraline, have some mercy for *me*, and do not ask more from me than I dare grant. You have been wrong, very wrong—but you know how to open the door of forgiveness—I shall not suffer you to take more to yourself than is your due; and what is your due, I will, to the best of my ability, instruct you to bear, as you ought, and as is your best interest.'

The power which Lady Heraline had been so inclined to dispute with Mr. Meryon, she now seemed entirely to concede; and in the distress of her mind, she gave herself up wholly to his guidance. The earl joined him in his kind endeavours to heal the wound made in her peace, but went far beyond him in that sort of comforting which he thought necessary to the restoration of his own quiet. The vicar acted like a skilful sur-

geon, who, before he heals a wound, removes every thing that can produce subsequent mischief—her father like a rapid empiric, who, as long as the surface is skinned over, presumes that all must be well.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE next year of Lady Heraline's life closed very decently. She had recovered her spirits, and was on good terms with Mr. Meryon, who, while he directed her to make every profitable use of the disaster that had for a time overwhelmed her, restored to her every comfort and advantage that depended on himself. To her father she behaved, if not with cordiality, with external propriety; and even her treatment of Mrs. Parr, provoked as she sometimes was by her want of discernment, was no worse than the many good things attached to her situation, would well compensate. As mistress of the first family in that part of the country, she could not be quoted as of *very* bad example. She made no base associations—she had no profuse taste in dress, nor was she frugal in it—she did not wear *rouge*—she discouraged smuggling—she disliked cards—she rose early, and was always employed. To the poor, she was liberal, and to those about her, generous—she encouraged trade around her—and she gave no ear to slander or gossip.—She took especial care that no one under her authority should disgrace her—whatever was wrong,

she chose to do herself; and as this disposition was not of a subordinate class, she easily obtained forgiveness or excuse.—‘His lordship was known to be odd and whimsical—her ladyship was a fine creature, only a little spoiled, and certainly, it could not be denied, very proud—but then, when she *did* condescend, she made up for it all.—It was pity, poor thing! that she lost her dear mamma; for those French folks were not the best teachers for young ladies;—they always hated the English, and set them against their own country-people.—Mrs. Parr was a very nice woman—but certainly not a fit bringer-up of such a great lady—a plain person as she was; and every body knew her origin. And what could good Mr. Meryon do with people so much above him?—he must say as they said—though, indeed, since her ladyship had taken to him, she was certainly much better—at least, not quite so high.’

These were the opinions of the St. Emerilian tea-tables, in little parlours and back shops—opinions very much improved, when at a general confirmation, they saw Lady Heraline place herself amongst the candidates, entirely divested of all ornament and distinction; and when, on the ensuing Easter Sunday, she took the centre place at the communion-table, attended by Mrs. Parr, and showing the most becoming seriousness.

Those who wished well to the house of Beltravers, now looked forward with kindly-disposed confidence to the approaching reign. Lord Lynford had inspired no interest: he was considered only as waiting, in sour solitude, the termination of an useless life embittered by disease which attracted no pity, because it seemed the privilege of his rank, and perfectly consentaneous, as an end, to the means he had pursued.

The time came when hopes were to be realized or to cease. Lord Lynford received the shock that was to close his endurances and his existence; and Annette came to her lady's bed-side one morning an hour earlier than usual, with the prefatory '*O mon Dieu!*' of some astounding event.

The Lady Heraline's self-possession did not desert her. When she had heard the fact, she sent for Mrs. Parr, and, from her, learnt particulars, and heard that the medical assistance nearest, had long since arrived, and that a messenger was despatched to Exeter for the physician. Mr. Meryon was with Lord Lynford's servants in his chamber. She sent Mrs. Parr to say that she was rising, and to obtain the latest tidings.

In the mean time, she had hastily drest; and sending for his lordship's valet, she heard farther particulars, all describing the seizure as paralytic, and of a desperate extent.—Mr. Meryon then

came out to her, in a state of feeling that showed his grateful attachment, his unconsolated grief for his patron, and his tender concern for a young woman so situated. What regarded herself, she waived : she made no false pretensions to exquisite feeling, nor any claim to peculiar consideration ; but she enjoined care and encouraged exertion, on the part of every one ; and while she shrunk, even in thought, from any participation in the scene, she affectionately coaxed Mr. Meryon into supplying her deficiencies. She meant that every thing right should be done by others ; but in herself she had no fortitude. On this point she reasoned when alone, and found that, if what was requisite, was performed, the hand which achieved it, was not to be considered. Her post was to rule the movements of others. The garrison was under her command—she was not a common soldier. She then again rang her bell to make inquiries—and to order her breakfast.

Mr. Meryon came again to her, while she was taking it. She did not forget to ask him if he had had his. He could scarcely tell :—she insisted on his suffering her to take care of him, and, with all her condescending graces, and with the most elegant humility, confessed her own inefficiency, and begged him not to let her father be sensible of it, through his neglect of his own powers of assist-

ing him.—‘ I leave all to you,’ said she, ‘ but your care of yourself.’

Her friend was now an old man, but still in the perfect enjoyment of every faculty and power. He had no wish to spare himself in such a case : he replied, ‘ I will do the best I can for you, if you, in return, will do the best you can for *yourself*.’

‘ He does not mean eating and drinking, as I mean by him,’ said she to herself, ‘ but still I will do it.—I wish to do right.—I am sure I do not wish to do wrong : I have suffered too much to do it again.’

By the evening of the day, the earl was again relieved, and the next morning still better, though much injured by the attack. The prospect now was more dreary than ever for poor Lady Heraline ; and Mr. Meryon did every thing in his power to reconcile her to an unqualified submission.

Again the earl was settled on his couch, and the vicar and his lordship’s daughter had established their system of attention. And at the moment when all around him thought best of his situation, and really began to fancy they must submit to see him again at least sitting, he was taken off, while Lady Heraline was at her toilette, and Annette was at once adjusting her draperies, and smoothing her own way to favour and confidence, by compli-

ments on something, which, translated into English, would have come out, her ladyship's amiable endurance of my lord's existence.

On receiving the news of this, the most decisive step her father ever had made, her head turned: she sat down in fear of falling or fainting, but was in a moment herself again.

A message from Mr. Meryon, telling her that he awaited her in her drawing-room, removed her from the observation of her personal servants, and them from the restraint of her presence. Mrs. Parr was the messenger, and the decency of her deportment could neither excite nor encourage any indecorum. She was ready with a few words of general commiseration for all who died and all who remained.—An apostrophe to the deceased earl, and another to the surviving baroness:—a compliment—a congratulation—a condolence—a dismal retrospect—a brighter prospect—were all over the tip of her tongue in a few words. She attended Lady Lynford to the door of the room to which she was summoned;—the men-servants were in waiting to throw it open and set her chair; and she was left alone with Mr. Meryon.

His fair cheek, which a cheerful tint—the reflection of a wintry sun setting to rise again in splendour—usually overspread, was now pale, and channelled with a few tears: he dried them as she

approached ; but unable to speak, he seated himself by her, and carrying her hand to his lips, seemed, by that action, to give her his cordial blessing, and to do homage to her new rank.

Her agitation was considerable—but she regained the use of her tongue before he could speak.—‘ I know,’ said she, ‘ what has occurred ; and glad I am to spare you the pain of telling me :—but, my dear sir, do not feel too much for me :—you know my sentiments and my abhorrence of affectation and grimace :—the De Quintes disgusted me with both—when they acted in public, and unmasked in private.—I know the worst of my situation ; and if I do not meet it as you would expect, remember the force of many years’ tutelage. Under *your* management, my heart might be now breaking ; and perhaps the power to feel thus forcibly, and, I believe, rightly, is preferable to my present state of mind ; but I must bear with myself, and you with me. Though too proud perhaps to be tutored, I may be corrected ; but, at the present moment, you must not expect me to act out of myself.’

‘ You will find me,’ said the vicar, ‘ I hope, a very gentle corrector ;—but, as I believe I am your guardian, I must be your sincere friend.—I could have wished to have found feelings some-

what different from those which you now express, occupying your mind at this moment.'

'I believe,' said she, 'yours is always a candid judgment on my defects, and I feel obliged to you for it.—You know how I have been trained; and you must admit the impossibility, or at least the improbability, of my being better than I am.—I execrate the De Quintes, while I feel enslaved by their theories; and, upon my honour, I am ready to confess, that all the good I have in me, I owe to Mrs. Parr, whom, I need not tell you, I despise.—But as to the present moment, if I make you angry, or grieve you, neither of which, God knows, would I willingly do, you must recollect, that from the time when the De Quintes took me, the event that has occurred, was the bribe with which they allured me:—it is for this moment, and for this event, that every movement has been calculated—therefore, can I lament it?'

Mr. Meryon shook his head.

'Why shake your head, my dear sir, at me?'

'Because you lose a pleasure at the time when you fancy you are avoiding pain.'

'Probably I may; but I am not made for thought.—Yet I will confess to you, that I have a glimmering notion of gratification—I will not say *enjoyment*—that may arise from a different set of feelings.—I have seen persons acting in direct op-

position to my manner, and whom I have almost envied ;—but, I believe, it was rather because there was a grace or an interest in their conduct, which I felt wanting in mine.—I have often compared my own mind to a fine broad sunshine, and that of others totally unlike me, to a situation of shade, and verdure, and coolness ; and I have sometimes felt half ashamed of mine ;—but then it has occurred to me, that it was as foolish to feel so, as it would be to wish for a sickly state of health in preference to my excellent constitution.—I have heard of national defects, family defects, personal defects, mental defects—you must allow me the privilege of the last, and take me for what I am.—I can never be called to account for that which was never given me.'

' We must have further conversation on this subject,' said Mr. Meryon—' you must not hold such a doctrine—at present, I would only warn you against the terrible possibility, that that to which you reconcile yourself so easily now, as natural blindness, may, some years hence, appear to you to have been, as I make no scruple to say it is, a voluntary hood-winking—I can now only insist on the most perfect propriety of conduct in every point, or I will not interest myself in your affairs.'

' You may depend upon me : ' said Lady Lyu-

ford—‘there can be no danger of my disobeying, when I love and respect my governor:—I hope you are my sole guardian, though I rather suppose old Lady Drumcannon may be joined with you—and perhaps this is requisite.—Do you know whether I am to have Mrs. Parr?—I hope not as guardian.’

‘Not as guardian, I can assure you, but I believe as your attendant lady; for you must have some one to appear with you, even here. In town, Lord Lynford’s arrangement for you is different; and I do not think you will find any cause to complain.’

So gracious was the baroness’s reply, that it seemed as if she had only needed to be an orphan, to be perfectly amiable—but human nature does not play harlequin-tricks; and there is some difference between our being in good humour with the Almighty, and our acting so as to obtain his approbation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE deceased earl's will made his daughter of age at twenty-one, of which she now wanted about two years; and till six months previous to that time, she was to reside at St. Emeril's Court. Mrs. Parr was to live with her entirely; and Mr. Meryon, her sole guardian, without whose consent she could do nothing during her minority, was to be as much with her as he could—she might absent herself occasionally from her residence—she might travel; but Mr. Meryon must attend her; and for this purpose, an arrangement was prepared, and an allowance was made to him to meet the expense of a curate.

She might marry under age, if with Mr. Meryon's approbation. The only restriction imposed on her, respected the country of the husband she should choose; and this, let her marry when she would, must be decidedly within the four seas. Any breach of this condition, subjected her to the tremendous penalty of her whole inheritance, except a reserved annuity of five hundred pounds, which was described, in the most degrading terms, to be for her sole subsistence.

Had she needed any explanation of this clause, Mr. Meryon's endeavour to account for it would have satisfied her. He traced it up to the nefarious conduct of the De Quintes, whose attempts, he presumed, the earl feared might be renewed after his decease: he described his feeling on this subject to have been almost unaccountably bitter, especially considering that she had, to do her justice, behaved well in giving up these dangerous people.

'Well!' said she, 'there can be no danger now—I have long been convinced that they made up a story only to keep me under their dominion—I am sure, my dear sir, you cannot suppose there can be any collusion between me and them.'

Mr. Meryon acquitted her most honourably.

She now warmly, sincerely, affectionately, and repeatedly, professed her intended confidence in her guardian. There was not a thought of her heart which he should not know—there was not a step to be taken, on which she would not previously consult him.—It must be confessed that the influence of the miniature-picture, and the pains she had bestowed in copying it, came under neither of these heads; therefore it was no breach of her *word* to say nothing on the subject; but still here began concealment, and here was virtually a departure from the *spirit* of her undertaking.

The six months preceding her attaining her majority, were to be spent under the protection of Lady Drummannon, who had ‘most obligingly’ bound herself, by a very polite reply to Lord Lynford’s request, to introduce her to the society in which she was to find her friendships and associations, to present her at court in the formalities of the existing fashion, and to be her *chaperon*, as long as such an appointment should be requisite. For this purpose, the young lady was, at the period specified in the will, to betake herself to her own house in Grosvenor Square, still retaining Mrs. Parr about her, but leaving Mr. Meryon to accompany her or remain at St. Emeril’s, as he saw good.

In all this, considering the shortness of her time of tutelage, there was nothing very grievous. The adhesive quality bestowed on Goody Parr was the worst; but still as she was not afraid of her, and only a little ashamed of her; there was no feeling of hostility towards her; at least, not enough to overcome that instinctive tenderness, which, however it might slumber, was never quite asleep in the young lady’s heart. The substitution of Lady Drummannon, which must take place on the removal to London, answered every purpose.—Goody Parr might inspect household affairs, buy and provide, for which offices she was by nature

and experience, very fit—she might air with her in her carriage, when she had no better company, which she could not suppose would be often her misfortune—and she might be very useful in contributing to her taking necessary exercise on foot.—She was no horse-woman, either in practice or figure—therefore some more agreeable associations might be found for that contingency—she would permit her to sit with her when alone, because it was very convenient to have somebody to ring the bell, stir the fire, and, though not to snuff candles, to look to them; and as her ladyship felt her spirit of independence disturbed and her pursuits hindered, by too much assiduity in servants, and she was sometimes too much occupied, and at all times too rapid, to attend to small concerns, a deputy-conservator of her comforts was no bad resource.—She would take care that Goody was always well drest—she should be treated like what she had made herself, a gentlewoman, and the poor soul should, after all her woes, be made comfortable.

All these points, and innumerable others of nearly the same nature, and as fitly adapted to the solemnity of the proceedings of St. Emeril's Court, were settled in the young baroness's mind, before her father's remains were consigned to their last abode. She had even visited the cabinet, from

which she had borrowed the picture, but—the picture was gone ! And now doubly did she rejoice in the exertion which she had made to copy it.

Mr. Meryon took all pains, all trouble on himself, and gently checking the vivacity of her mind, forbore the compelling it to take refuge in grimace. He was uniformly serious, and she did not offend him by any very violent contrast. She confined herself to the house, or a retired part of the grounds, while the body lay un-interred—she was kind to poor John Brown, who was now closing his life at his cottage, dying, as he said, like a dog who could not outlive his master. She was munificent in her ideas of bounty on the present occasion ; and her very deep mourning arriving in good time, and being, as Annette confessed, very becoming, all went well. She made her appearance, in due form, at church, and though a little vexed at a mistake in blazoning the escutcheon on the pulpit-cloth—which she told herself must, and positively should be corrected—she kept her self-command, and listened with great complacency, to the vicar's sermon on the text, ' If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ; even *there* shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.'

There was no call for flattery, or even for much personal application, in a discourse on such

a text. It referred indeed to the defunct, but it was equally addressed to those whom he had left behind him; and his daughter thought herself fortunate in escaping the necessity of feeling deeply for her father or painfully for herself:—decorum, or rather dignity, admitted of her keeping out of sight of the congregation; and there was nothing yet to be predicated of her that was not in her favour. In her manner of going through the subsequent forms of business, Mr. Meryon had every reason to be satisfied; and she received and returned the civilities of the neighbourhood, in a way that could not fail to send abroad a good report of her, and counteract any prejudice conceived against her:—all her faults were consigned to the grave of her father, and she set out with the most enviable advantages of wealth, grandeur, and popularity—‘And now,’ thought she, ‘come somebody like the picture—and I will confess myself happy.—Why should I not say this to dear Meryon?—Shall I?—No, I cannot—I have made no promise on that point—every thing else, the dear good creature shall know—I am sure he deserves every attention I can pay him—and as to marrying without his consent, I would as soon trust myself—to—to—to—what shall I say?—to rebuild the church—or to cut my hair with my own fingers.’

The remaining years of Lady Lynford's life must have been marked as of peculiar felicity, had they produced any period of happiness, superior to that which intervened between the death of her father, and her departure from Devonshire. A word of unpleasant difference never occurred between her and her guardian. Giving up herself entirely to his gentle guidance, she suffered him to follow his own plans for amusing and informing her. She proceeded in those paths of literature which he thought necessary to the due furniture of her mind ; and as assiduously did he bring her acquainted with common things. These pursuits formed winter-employment, which he thought preferable to any occupation which guests in her house would have afforded her : her manners were too good to want the improvement of imitation : he wished her rather to originate than to copy ; and he saw that she might safely be trusted to find out what was right in her to do, as well as what was due to herself, in which latter perception there was indeed no danger of her falling short.

In the summer he travelled with her, and gave her all the information which his younger years had laid up for him ; and she every day found her respect for him increased by the variety of his knowledge, and her affection for him rendered

more tender by the evidences he gave of parental solicitude about her. It would have been painful to him to have disturbed this serenity by exciting an artificial tempest of experiment, or he might perhaps have found that some part of the merit of the young lady's conduct consisted in the novelty of her freedom, in her having every thing the world could, at the moment, give, and in the exhilarating effect of those rose-coloured hopes which made the future responsible for the improvement of her present happiness. This was no situation of trial, except as prosperity may be reckoned amongst the greatest that await us.

But with the commencement of the year that was to remit her to her own keeping, came other ideas; and she was less settled in her pursuits and acquirements. So little disgust had Mr. Meryon's guardianship given her, that it was her earnest wish that he would accompany her to London, and remain with her there. She left no solicitation untried: she promised him every thing that could induce him:—in playful banter, she proposed giving him a sleepy potion, and conveying him to Grosvenor Square, without his consciousness to the remove—she pretended to bribe him with the undertaking of obtaining for him whatever mitre he would fix on for his choice. He laughed at her, and shook his head, and asked if a mitre

would conceal his silvered locks, or hide the crow-foot on his temple. He professed that his only anxiety was to see her return to take possession of her noble property ; and he hoped it might be followed by her commands to unite her whom he had initiated into the Christian church, and led on in its duties and rites, whom as the one sheep particularly committed to his charge, he loved with a tenderness that even parental affection could scarcely exceed—to unite this dear deposit to some man of real worth and fair pretensions, who would be to her, husband, father—and that friend which the course of nature could not long allow him to be.

To separate was now becoming, even to the hopeful favourite of fortune, a very painful necessity ; and however impatient she had been for the last week in January, which was the time fixed for her departure, she could not but feel a contrary impulse, which made her regret the hours as they flew. She had had very little more intercourse with Lady Drumcannon by letter, than was necessary to acknowledge her kind acceptance of a troublesome office, but now she wrote to prepare her for the demand on her friendship. Having requested a reply, that she might be certain her intrusion would not be sudden, she received a very civil billet, conveying the old viscountess's sentiments of

congratulation, but in the not very promising hand-writing, and the much less promising phraseology of a friend who wrote for her ladyship, whom a cold had disabled. The billet began with ‘Lady Drumcannon’s compliments,’ and concluded ‘Your’s to command, Harriet Wyerley.’

Lady Lynford felt a little mortified and disgusted, but confessed that it would be very silly to quarrel with this accidental circumstance, which could, in no way, affect Lady Drumcannon.—Mr. Meryon smiled, and commented on the importance of attention in trifles, if the want of it was productive of an alienation of good opinion.—There was no occasion to lecture his ward on this point. However little attention she had to bestow on some things which demanded it, the *etiquette* of life, and whatever could keep up her consequence—for, to *increase* it was hardly possible—and whatever could recommend her, where she wished herself recommended, were never passed over by her without due circumspection.

The last week that ‘dear St. Emeril’s’—now dearer than ever, for it was to be quitted—could claim her for its inhabitant, began.—The last Sunday came; and the vicar felt it an awful business to preach his farewell-sermon to this child of his heart and conscience, who had won her way to his

esteem, when she might have forfeited all his interest, and had paid to his spontaneous affection, the tribute of a love such as he wished her father could have excited in her generous heart. She was his pride—his sole pride—on nothing else, in this world, did he look with such pleasure—on no countenance was there such a smile to greet him when he returned; and the expression of regret when he quitted her, was too bewitching for even *his* years, the clerical function, the gravity of a scholar, and the chastened habits of an almost-wearied pilgrim, to withstand—he had lingered when she said, ‘Do not go yet.’—He had urged his feet to their quickest pace when she had said, ‘Come back as soon as you can.’—He had listened to her ingenuous acknowledgment of faults, till he almost forgot they were faults—he had encouraged the growth of budding virtues, and had seen them, in his imagination, shooting up into palm-trees—he had cared for her when he had nothing else to call out his care—and now he must resign her—it was necessity—it was for her advantage—and he submitted as cheerfully as he could.

In preaching for this last time, he made no scruple of addressing himself to her, connecting her with those whose best interests had, in his situation, as their pastor, a proportionate claim on him; he took for his text, part of a verse of the

Proverbs, 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place,'—and thus afforded himself an opportunity of giving religious confidence to her whom he was to commit to the world, and of comforting those who might be anxious for her safety in it. Unimportant as might seem the occasion, to those used to the intercourse between city and city, it was not so to the St. Emerilians, many of whom thought as seriously as could their vicar, of a now fatherless young woman's undertaking any thing so formidable as the journey, and encountering such a many-headed monster as they imagined the metropolis. Little less than Mr. Meryon, though on different motives, did they grieve at the loss of her; and far less sanguine were they in their hope of her returning. It was in the power of the preacher's oratory, to make the subject impressive:—he could abate the repinings of the poor, by representing the lions in the way of the rich:—he could show that the cares of the lofty are neither so few nor so light as the lowly think them—he could, and without fear of distressing her, contrast the orphan-state of his ward, obliged to ask the protection of comparatively a stranger, with the ready resources of a cottager's habitation, to which sons and daughters might apply, when they needed what she now asked, without offending their honest pride, or the fear of slight or rejection.—He en-

forced on the minds of his hearers, the ignorance and folly of envying greatness, and the unobserved, and, consequently, unrecognised equalization of blessings. He then bade them remember their benefactress in her absence, not unmindful of the hand which, under Providence, so frequently had fed many of them from her well-used abundance—he enjoined them to give her a place in their prayers; and he assured them of her return with the same affection towards them, as she now entertained for them: he repeated to them the comforting assurance that, as she would depart in the fear of the Lord, she would be certain of his protection. He then addressed the lady herself.—She had the good taste to rise when he turned to her; and she stood patiently and submissively, while, with no more qualification than he had allowed those whom he had already addressed, he brought to her recollection the security and attaching characteristics of the home which she was leaving, the trials she might be exposed to in that which she was seeking, and the great need there was of a perpetual remembrance that she was not under the eyes of the Lord as her guardian alone, but as her judge: he most fervently recommended her to the best protection of the Almighty—and, in broken accents, concluded.—The humble church which her bounty had improved into a building of more

than common neatness, was filled ; and a stranger must have thought the parishioners all of one family, and under equal sensibility to some one interest :—there was not an eye that did not glisten, few that did not weep—there was not a heart that did not reverberate every good wish that the preacher uttered for the noble orphan. The people rushed out of the church to repeat their blessings as she got into her carriage ; and if there was a delicious moment in the life of Heraline Beltravers, it was this, when she was made to feel that the good have pleasures beyond those which even her great advantages insured her.

CHAPTER XIX.

AND now came the vigil of this red-letter day, and the last conferences of the guardian and his ward. She again urged his accompanying her, and offered to make up for any delay which awaiting his little preparation might occasion, by subsequent exertions on the road; but he was firm. Almost changing places with him, she remonstrated on the risques to which his refusal exposed her.—‘I may yet,’ said she, ‘with all this good old dowager’s care and vigilance, contrive to make mistakes and commit blunders—nay, I have not confidence enough in *her*, to be certain that she might not lead me into some, herself.—If I remember right, her own marriage was imprudent and unhappy. Whether Lord Drummannon is alive or not, at the present moment, I do not recollect; but the Peerage, I suppose, will tell us, and I must look before I go. In short, my dear sir, you had better go and take care of me for the next six months; for you may depend upon it, I shall want you; and now that I am so accustomed to refer to you, I shall be terribly at a loss—it will be worse than wanting a dictionary; for I could find *that* at a

bookseller's; but you will be out of my reach.— And you know it would give me such consequence to be seen always with my lord-almoner in the back of my carriage! And you shall say grace, and we *will* have family-prayers, as we have now had so comfortably since you came to the administration.'

'I am really very much obliged to you, my dearest child,' said Mr. Meryon, 'for the serious value which you set on my attending you—my vanity is perhaps not quite as much proof as it ought to be, against the compliment—and I love, and I may say, esteem you, the more, for the preference which you show of what is in your judgment right, to what is, most probably, more agreeable:—but there are many objections, besides my own repugnance, to be urged against my compliance:—I might die with you; and only think what an inbittering an old man's funeral would be to your gaieties!'

'I will run that risque with pleasure—I do not think you will die these ten or fifteen years—and I am sure, I hope and pray you may not.'

'I should be a sad impediment to you, without power to do you good.—You are going to a world of fashion and finery, of which you must be sensible I know nothing.'

'O! but you have a good taste, and I intend

to have my own fashions, in choosing which, you might assist.'—

' No, no—I am much more likely to be unreasonably shocked at things because they are strange to me—and things which it would be wrong in you not to adopt. I have always recommended it to my middle-aged friends, to keep up their intercourse with boys and girls, and their acquaintance with the fashions of the rising generation, that they may not start, like a horse at a wheel-barrow, when they see a cap or hat not just like their grandmother's—I am for great lenity to young persons in small things, provided there is no sinning against good manners in what they do.—Let young women have their top-knots and furbelows, their flowers and feathers, and ribands and rings, if their situation in life warrants it; but they must not come to *me*, as I fear you would do, to ask, point-blank, whether I like such trappings—because I should say, “ I like you better without them ”—and then you must either, out of compliment, discard them, or run counter to my taste.'

' Well then—I will never trouble you on such subjects.'

' Still there are great objections — London might disagree with me; and, after all, I really do not think the tenour, or at least the spirit of my lord's will, admits of my continuing myself dic-

tator, when Lady Drumcannon is to commence her consulate.'

'There was nothing more to be urged. Lady Lynford desisted, only repeating with a tone unusually grave—'I wish I may not wish for you, when wishing is vain.'

'I will come to you in any exigency,' said the vicar, in his kindest manner:—'at a minute's warning, I will set off, whenever you say you need me.—Will that satisfy you?'

'Perfectly—you dear good creature—I really believe, after all, I had better choose *you* for lord of my castle, to save me from doing any thing foolish.'

'That would be doing the thing itself, to avoid doing it.'

'Well! you shall see—I will answer for nothing if you provoke me.—You were born, I presume, within these same four seas?'

'O yes—I have *that* requisite,' said he, laughing; 'I was born, I believe, nearly equidistant from them all.'

'Then you see *that* is a safe point.'

With the cheerfulness of this little *badinage*, the guardian dismissed his beloved ward to her early repose, considering the claim to be made on her spirits the next day.—Reluctantly she obeyed him, when he bade her depart; and again she returned, when half way to her chamber, under pre

tence of things to be said ; but, in reality, to assure herself that he was not too painfully interested about her. She found him reading, and was satisfied.

In her arrangements for her London residence, she had made a sacrifice, greater than he could have expected, in suffering him to persuade her that Annette was not a proper servant to be about her person, in her new mode of life. He knew the human heart in general too well, and her ladyship's in particular, to hope to accomplish this separation by straight-forward argument—that she was a Catholic, would have been no new objection—that she was a foreigner, was, in her department, a distinguishing recommendation:—if he had impeached her principles, they would have been treated as below consideration ; and if he had found fault with her practice, he must have subjected himself to that which was very unpleasant and unfit—he therefore represented her as beneath the situation, and, of necessity, uninformed in points of service, where habit was requisite.—By these means he gained a patient hearing ; and Mademoiselle Annette was easily induced to put an end to the courtship of some one of her lovers, by matrimony, and to employ the six months of her lady's proposed absence in settling herself in her new home, ready to remain there if her services were not re-

claimed, or to resume her situation should they be required.

To supply her place for the time, there stood ready, in London, a niece of Mrs. Parr who was *au faite* in the toilette-duties of a peeress in town—and against whom there could be no objection. Mrs. Parr, for the sake of two such valuable considerations, as the getting rid of Annette and the introduction of her own relation, proffered all the personal attendance necessary on the journey; and both she, and the far-wiser Mr. Meryon, thought they had carried a most important point. With regard to the latter, he had done better to have promised Annette five guineas for betraying her mistress's secrets; but this he could neither know nor suppose.

Of Mr. Meryon's comfort in her absence, Lady Lynford had shown herself gratefully and affectionately considerate. His curate, a poor sickly man, who rather needed than could afford much assistance, had brought with him a wife and child; and, for mutual accommodation, some additions had been made to the parsonage-house, which, without abridging the master's independence, allowed these new-comers to live under the roof, and would now, by this arrangement, afford Mr. Meryon domestic society at his table, and whenever it was his wish to quit his study. Mr. Holby, the

curate, had been an old friend of the vicar's ; and it was the hope of the benefit he might receive from change of air, which had induced Mr. Meryon to fix on him as his choice, and had tempted Mr. Holby to forego a more lucrative situation ; his wife was a woman well-suited to the purposes for which she might be useful—she was of some family, had domestic activity, knowledge of the world, information on various subjects, and prepossessing manners : the child, who was a pretty little girl, was no objection to Mr. Meryon. At all events, the experiment of his being thrown thus on these persons, could last only half a year :—on the third of August, Lady Lynford was to be of age, and, as near that time as possible, she was to return to St. Emeril's, to be met by her tenantry on the boundary of her estate, and conducted to her home in the style of ancient times.—Mr. Meryon was to be ready to receive her : the usual festivities were then to take place ; and he was to resume his situation with her, and keep it as long as she had power over herself.

‘ Farewell, farewell!—God in Heaven protect you—my dear child,’—whispered Mr. Meryon, as he passed her ladyship's chamber, to go to that which he occupied—‘ I hope and trust you are sound asleep—if my watching would guard

you, gladly would I forego half my sleep, while you are absent from me.'

He went indeed to bed ; but his mind was too much occupied to allow him to compose himself immediately.

' I have not said half enough to guard her,' said he to himself, ' in some material points—there is one which I cannot too much enforce—she will not set out very early : I must have another talk to her.'

Lady Lynford slept sweetly, and dreamt agreeably—she rose early, and certainly her feelings were of a high description, when passing through the hall to the breakfast-parlour, she saw her baggage arranged in such a manner, as showed the importance of herself and her movements.—But a wish that the parting was over, darted across this agreeable sensation—the atoning pleasure was, however, too near at hand, to suffer this seriously to distress her.

Breakfast was ready for her at the appointed moment, and Mr. Meryon partook it, or made as if he partook it, with her. He wished to say a few words to her—he wished to make them few ; —for, even at the last moment, he was tender in the use of power—he was not ready to speak, though prepared—he wished to impress—he feared to disgust—or even to abate enjoyment.

He seemed going to begin—his ward looked attentive—her attention courted him—‘ I will not preach,’ said he, ‘ I do not wish to abate your pleasure—I wish to secure it to you—none can be safe in enjoyment or firm in its foundation, on which we cannot ask the blessing of Heaven.—Do not then, my dear child, while you drink of the river forget the fountain. As to prudence, *your* particular situation calls on me to bring forcibly to your recollection, the important clause in my lord’s will—and *my* particular situation allows me to ask a promise of you, the observance of which may, I hope, tend to preserve you from evil.—With regard to your own situation, circumspection is not all that is necessary—you must not, if you would do right, refer yourself to the time when circumspection will be necessary—to keep yourself free from reproach, and indeed, in common justice and equity towards others, you must take care that it be immediately known, that you are to marry no man who was not born within the four seas—let the penalty be declared, that no one may be mis-led—let it be your first care to impress on Lady Drummannon, the predicament in which you are placed: I have warned her in this letter which you will give her, but this may not be sufficient.

‘ Now with regard to the consideration which

I now solicit for myself, solely with a view to your security, the only promise I ask, is the absence of all disguise with me—do not suffer yourself, when afar off, to begin to be reserved towards me ; have no concealments, but those becoming your sex—and then you will never find it difficult to be ingenuous ; but I tell you fairly, Lady Lynford, that if once you begin concealment, when I am not near you to disperse it, you will, in a short time, find yourself in a labyrinth, from which you may wish to escape when you may not be able.—I trust I have never forfeited, or even ever discouraged your confidence;—and, I believe I may without presumption say, that if the sincerest love, the most lively interest, and an anxiety, all but parental, can deserve it—I am entitled to it.’—He took out his handkerchief—turned away on his chair, and with his elbow over the back of it, remained silent.

Lady Lynford could not speak—at the very moment of his exhortation she felt that she was disobeying him—she had the miniature in her watch-pocket—and she dared not own it—because she had done exactly what he warned her against—she had begun to be secret.

Struck by the close application of his advice, she would have given the world to have stood clear to herself—but in vain she wished.—What could

she do? her rapid thoughts told her that it was impossible to relinquish the picture, and her value for it told her it would be expected—the carriage was at the bottom of the steps.

‘ And, after all, of what consequence was this picture?—and whose was it? It was a picture to which she had merely taken a fancy—and her father had himself told her that it was the portrait of one long since dead. Beside, she had secreted it from Mr. Meryon at first; and now, what could she say?’

The query with which she concluded her soliloquy, was honest:—not so the previous reasoning. She had withdrawn all credit from Lord Lynford’s assertions—she no longer believed it the picture of the Pretender, or even an imaginary portrait. She felt that it was that of some one whom she was tyrannically forbidden to love, without any reason being assigned: and this persuasion, though she was compelled to keep it smothered, still continued to give zest to a trifle, whetted her curiosity, and made that energetic, which, without it, might have slept till it expired.

She would have given any thing but the picture, to have had time for five minutes’ further debate with herself; but it was not just then to be obtained, without some very abrupt proceeding, which she saw might excite suspicion. Almost

off her guard, and about to be ingenuous, she felt for the picture.—‘ I do not care,’ said she to herself, ‘ he *shall* see it, and know all—I will not suffer so again.’—She was resolved—but she only brought out her watch, and told herself what it told her.—‘ I shall leave him in displeasure,’ said she to herself; ‘ he will think the worse of me—I have no time now to be reconciled to him—I have no time to explain—but I shall be away only six months; and when I come back, I *will* tell him all.’

Was there any thing in her countenance that betrayed her?—If there was, it could not betray her to Mr. Meryon’s observation; for he did not look towards her.—Was there any thing in her voice that betrayed her?—No; she did not audibly speak.—Was there any thing in her silence that betrayed her?—If there was, it was only because silence in emotion was unusual with her, but it did betray her, and Mr. Meryon looked up;—she tried to smile—smiles were not unnatural to her; but the smile of this moment was of a peculiar description—it struck him as not merely a smile forced through the counteraction of the moment—it was expressive of embarrassment, if not of more.

She felt herself watched—she started up, drew on her glove, rang the bell, desired Mrs. Parr to be ready immediately, shook Mr. Meryon’s hand,

and seated herself in the carriage before Mrs. Parr could come to her.—The chariot-door once shut, she was profuse in kissing her hand to her guardian, and in all that dumb show could do ; and she left him, under the portico from which the steps descended, whispering to himself, ‘ I am confident she is practising some deception—’tis unlike her—I may be mistaken—I wish I may be.’—‘ But I feel it here, in full conviction,’ resumed he, striking his breast as he crossed the hall to the room from which she had departed.—‘ Well !—her first letter will perhaps explain something—I will not accuse—I may be wrong ; and an error of this kind might ruin her temper and mind—it is an unpleasant surmise—I hope it was only the disturbance of the moment—God bless her and keep her ! for she is a fine creature, and if she falls into good hands, she may be safe—otherwise——’

Mr. Meryon, pensive as he might foresee he must be after this parting, and more anxious than he had foreseen cause to be, removed to his parsonage-house before his hour of dinner ; and St. Emeril’s Court was deserted, just when a departing mild winter was leading in the infant-spring of the west, to charm, to allure, and to detain.

But even stronger pretensions than ‘ dear St. Emeril’s’ could make, would have been silenced, had they obtruded themselves on the ear of its

mistress on her quitting it. Her prospect was sufficiently occupying to excuse her; but her reflections in the outset of her journey were absorbing; and sinking back in the carriage, she was offended during the first half-hour, when Mrs. Parr informed her of the persons who were collected about the park-gate and on the road to see the last of her. That her magnificent ladyship should be out of temper, never excited the wonder or the curiosity of her dependent—nay, it had long ceased to call up her tender solicitude—indulgence of nature, and the self-care of interest, made great allowance for a superior being so exposed to the vexation of disappointment, when forced to see, even in common cases, that her wishes could not alter the nature of things, and that the world was not made for her alone. The causes of complaint which these accidents afforded Mrs. Parr, were neither frequent nor lasting—she was well paid for toleration; and, just now, a little peevishness was very allowable.

At the end of the first stage, the baroness was to dispense with the service of her own horses, as not suited to the road or to London: every thing was prepared for her on her way; and a young princess going to share a throne, could hardly have required more observance or adulation than she received. Mrs. Parr was only the more obse-

quious, as more in view.—The half of the journey passed, there was no strife between the attractions of the two ends—Mrs. Parr was again smiled on ; and ‘ Thank God here we are ! ’ were sounds to which the heavy knocker of the Grosvenor-square-house played a deep bass, while the depressed lever of the bell produced a melodious repetition in a higher octave.

CHAPTER XX.

SERVANTS had preceded the baroness; and good fires, and a well-lighted stair-case, afforded an aspect of comfort and, at least, artificial cheerfulness. Her new waiting-woman was in attendance; and even Mrs. Parr's solicitude for her appearance, was removed, as soon as she came in sight. The anxious aunt had written to her, page after page, on the importance of the post she had procured for her, and her own concern in maintaining herself in it; and there had been no parsimony of 'You must'—and 'I advise you by all means'—to put her in the right way.—That the young woman, at the first private conference with her well-intentioned relation, said frankly, 'Dear aunt, if I had not determined not to mind half you said, I should never have got on in learning what I had to do'—would not have conveyed to Goody Parr, any idea that it was possible to say too much, or induced her, on any subsequent and similar occasion, to spare her labour.

The house had not improved by being nearly uninhabited.—It was long since it had been an object of attention; and, compared with the high order

of St. Emeril's Court, even its grandeur was mortifying, when Lady Lynford looked round on its dirty silk-hangings, and smelt soot and smoke in every thing she approached.—She sate down to her dinner in the style in which she had travelled, that is to say, permitting Mrs. Parr to take the bottom of the table and spare her the trouble of helping herself.

Her first concern on rising from table, was to order one of her men to announce her arrival to Lady Drumcannon, whom she described as living at the next house.—The man returned with 'Sir Somebody Something's compliments—he was happy to hear her ladyship was safely arrived, but had not the honour of her acquaintance.'—The natural conclusion was, that she had made a mistake between two next-doors—The man returned from a second embassy, saying that 'his Grace and the duchess were not yet come from Bath.'—This was the first embarrassment; and Mrs. Parr was ready to run out of the house to learn how it arose: but fortunately, the great event had already reached the quarter in which it needed to be known, and before a plan of proceeding could be settled, a message came from Lady Drumcannon, stating the continuance of her 'bad cold,' and promising that Miss Wyerley would pay her respects to the baroness, early in the morning. As no answer was

required, though it was a message of the usual description on such an occasion,—to get any thing out of the servant who brought it, unless his person had been known, and he could have been overtaken, without his pursuers being able to guess to which hand he turned, was impossible. Lady Lynford therefore was compelled to rest all her hopes on the promised visit, and, in effect, to wait on the movements of this contemned substitute of Lady Drummannon's.

As neither the baroness nor Mrs. Parr was a rustic novice in London, her ladyship was not impatient to go out next morning, nor obliged to part from Mrs. Parr to gratify any subordinate curiosity of hers.

The young lady's dress was the matter of first importance; and Lady Lynford did not doubt that, till she could engage horses, Lady Drummannon would accommodate her with the use of her carriage, even if her indisposition deprived her of the advantage of consulting her. All uneasiness on the not immediately finding the viscountess where she was supposed to reside, was forgotten; and Mrs. Parr, who showed her good sense in feeling that she was utterly unfit for the office assigned her, if it required to know any thing that she had not practised in Devonshire, felt already a sort of prophetic friendship for Miss Wyerley,

in the hope that her talents would supply her own deficiencies.

In the small conversation between Lady Lynford and Mrs. Parr while awaiting the arrival of this mirror of utility, it had been matter of question whether either of them recollected the features or person of Lord Drummannon, whose death the baroness had ascertained before she left home—but all doubt vanished when the lively Miss Wyerley entered: what he had been, was then immediately called to mind; and many queries, that it was as well not to bring forward, were answered. The lady was not young, nor was she, in the eyes of her whom she came to serve, very prepossessing; but Mrs. Parr, because her manners did not set *her* at a distance, and because she was very primly drest, was immediately captivated, and thought her ‘a very nice person.’ She did not exactly tell Lady Lynford that now she saw the model on which *she* might have been better formed, but, under the encouragement afforded her by Miss Wyerley’s abundant condescensions, she did little short of showing which of the two ladies ~~was~~ the most to her taste. She got as far, at the first opportunity, as repeated commendations of Miss Wyerley for ‘having no pride,’ which the baroness, who had, in the first five minutes, gauged her understanding and her principles of action,

instantly met with a sarcastic acquiescence, that made poor Goody Parr at least keep her admiration to herself.

In this first visit, however, there was too much business to be done, to waste time on speculations. Lady Druncannon's change of residence was explained; and Miss Wyerley seemed surprised that it should be news to 'her la'aship and her friend Mrs. Parr, that her la'aship had removed to a house just round the corner—It was so near that her la'aship still called it the square—It was certainly but a small concern, compared with the house in which she had lived in my lord's time, but it was a very lady-like pretty *bijou*, and in an excellent situation; for nothing could go in or out of the square that way, or to the parks, without her seeing it:—and then it was so very convenient for her la'aship's friends, that her la'aship got taken out to air, most days—only just now, indeed, her bad cold—but that would soon be gone—when the weather mended.'

Lady Lynford, a little off her guard, and feeling in some measure betrayed into circumstances of which she ought to have been apprised, looked at Mrs. Parr, who, with uncommon prudence, turned aside to avoid the appeal. The silence, however, which followed Miss Wyerley's speech, seemed to call on the speaker to speak on—at least,

it told her that her hearers were pausing. She resumed: 'I dare say your la'aship expected to find her la'aship where she was, but at the death of my lord, she, somehow, did not care for so large a house, you know, just for herself and me, you know—but your la'aship will find her living in a very genteel pretty style. She has her carriage—a very nice comfortable carriage; but she found horses and coachmen a great trouble—and she can always hire; for we have an excellent mews just by; and she patronizes the man—If your la'aship, or you, Mrs. Parr, want horses at any time—you have only just to send—and in ten minutes——'

Mrs. Parr began to fidget and looked frightened. The *non est inventa*, when Lady Drummannon was sought for, had, in her imagination, already set four post-horses, attached to the carriage that had brought them, with their heads towards the west.—A retrograde-movement was not, at this time, the first wish of her heart; and her gratitude was almost piety when she was again free from alarm; but now, degrading revelations came so fast—the all-together of Miss Wyerley, however it might suit *her*, was, she clearly saw, so unpleasant to the baroness; and Lady Drummannon, under the detail of her deputy, seemed so ill-chosen a chaperon, that she could scarcely expect Lady Lynford to accept her *officiousness*—for good

offices such performances could hardly be called. —But Mrs Parr, interested as she was in gentle proceedings, could not feel disappointed when she perceived the baroness draw up in a style she well understood, and heard her decline availing herself of this resource—‘horses,’ she said, ‘were bespoke, and she could defer her purchases till they arrived.’

The peeress’s spirit could not quite content itself with this cool reply.—She could not forbear commenting on the great alteration that must have taken place in Lady Drummannon’s mode of living, and expressing her fear that, under this change, such a charge as that of introducing her, must be very inconvenient—‘and—and—and—indeed unsuitable.’—

Miss Wyerley, perhaps fearing something worse might be coming, began to explain away—but Lady Lynford, though not half her age, was not to be so put down.

She went on to say that ‘she well remembered, when she was last in town, that the viscountess had lived much in the world—and to no one who did not, she was certain, would her father have consigned her—she remembered the resort of morning visitors and the phalanxed carriages which she had seen, when she went out for, or returned from, her exercise in the Parks or Kensington Gardens,

or her visits to the nursery-grounds in the King's Road. Her ladyship had taken her to the chapel-royal, and there her acquaintance seemed universal—she went very frequently to court—and she really had hoped to find her—and she was sure her father had the same ideas—she *had* hoped to find her going on in the same way—If she was not, she felt that she herself must be at a sad loss; and she really knew not how she could remain in town.'

This was going a step too far for Goody Parr's toleration, considering too the interests of her young niece; and she now joined Miss Wyerley in assurances that the change of residence could make no difference in the viscountess's power of executing the office she had taken on herself.—The word 'purchases' still rang in the officious spinster's ear, and she endeavoured to lead back to it, as the safer subject of discussion.

Modes of life affect modes of thinking; and those of Miss Wyerley were exactly consentaneous. She was of base origin on the one side, and of low origin on the other; and as she was dependent on the viscountess for every thing beyond the necessities of life, and had a very acute relish of its superfluities, it was her duty to herself, her interest, and her sole business, to be agreeable, an indispensibility so strongly impressed on her recollection, that it rendered her any thing but what

she aimed at being, and resolved itself into an incessant avoidance of silence and stillness. She was therefore insufferably civil, full of her own practice and opinions; and now, when in points that were within her reach, she might have got credit, she could not forbear egotising, and bringing forward her own paltry economy, as experience suited to the liberal manner in which Lady Lynford was to be drest.—Having never been used to affluence—for she had been associated with her principal, only on the death of Lord Drumcannon,—the sight of it filled her mind, and the hope of, in some degree, sharing in it, animated her heart, if that be the seat of covetousness.—She was out of her wits when she found a vacancy into which some artificer who would be grateful to her, might be recommended.—She characterized herself as a bold beggar—She repeated the *bons mots* of captains and colonels who threatened to have her taken up—and she hinted the excuse for her perseverance, in the smart answers she returned them, when she asked ‘what poor spinsters could do.’

In the corky humour of her spirits, she was almost on the point of departing, without delivering the message which was the principal feature of her embassy. Totally insensible to the impropriety into which she was every moment plunging deeper, she affected to make a ludicrous solemnity

of this commission, which she prefaced by a panegyric on Lady Drummannon's excellent constitution, describing it as in its highest vigour, save and except the unfortunate cold which confined her, and, 'she was sorry to say, made her a little deaf—but, if any body did but come a little near to her, she heard very well—it was what she had never before been subject to; but it might be a little upon the rheumatic, for that morning she had complained of a pain in her poor knee, which, on the whole, *she* thought a good sign; and this, she hoped, would excuse the liberty she was requested to take, in asking Mrs. Parr and dear Lady Lynford to come, in the sociable way, and take their tea that evening with her la'aship—when their humble servant would play mistress of the ceremonies. Lady Lynford could come in her nice new chair, which she saw standing in the hall—so convenient!—she had just popped her head in, at the very moment it was brought in, and she *did* take the liberty of asking the men to let her have a sit-down in it, as she was an intimate friend, she said, of the lady—so there she sat down, and looked quite like the baroness herself—quite grand—and the cushion was so nice and soft—she believed, by the feel, it was all eider-down—but as she was saying'—for Lady Lynford's forehead was growing very cloudy—'could the ladies oblige her la'aship?'

Mrs. Parr, who had endured to the utmost, was now almost ready to put her hand before the chatterer's mouth.—Concluding that Lady Lynford would not comply with so indecorous a request, she wished to spare her the condescension of excusing herself; but Lady Lynford would not be excused; she accepted the invitation, as the shortest method of satisfying herself on some points very requisite to be understood, before she wrote to her guardian, whom she had warned not to expect a letter till she had seen her chaperon.

CHAPTER XXI.

ONCE rid of this nuisance, Lady Lynford sat down to begin writing to Mr. Meryon, having previously determined, in this case, and well would it have been, if she had firmly resolved and kept her resolution in all cases, that she would not, by any error or negligence in the first instance, accumulate to herself vexation and repentance. She would tell him every thing now from the beginning—she would have no concealments—and she would exonerate herself from all responsibility, by taking no one step without his sanction:—it might occasion her some trouble in writing; but regularly kept up every day, she could form a journal with little loss of time—the first moment after breakfast should be devoted to this satisfactory duty—and she would begin now, that she might be ready to proceed with regularity and without recapitulation.

‘Where should she begin?’—Why, of course, from the moment of parting.—‘Not a little earlier?’—said conscience. ‘O dear!’ answered the writer—‘Of what use would it now be to go back to things past?—my narrative is to be of occurrences in my absence; and really, now that I am

at such a distance that I cannot immediately know what he thinks, or judge myself, from his looks, how my confession affects him, it is only putting myself in an ague for no purpose. At a future time, if I wish to have it to say that he has always had my perfect confidence, I can tell him of this foolish business, which, after all, is just nothing. What have I to tell but what he knows already? that those people—the De Quintes—showed me a picture as in their own possession, which was procured from my father's cabinet, and said it was that of a young French nobleman, when it was, on my father's assertion, that of the young Pretender, or, at best, an imaginary portrait—for, as to *my* persuasion on the subject, *that* rests entirely with myself, and I am sure would not be received in evidence one way or the other.—And what could he say to this?—Only, “Very well, my dear.” If, indeed, I were to tell him, that this picture is to me life and love—and that I can be content to end my existence in this sweet attachment alone—that I will, at least, never suffer any man to marry me, whose character of mind, as I see it here expressed in the countenance, does not as tenderly meet my own ideas of happiness:—were I to tell him all this, which I believe is the truth, and which I am afraid is the truth which I dread his knowing—were I, indeed, to volunteer all this, it might make him

anxious about me ; and that would be cruel, when I am at such a distance.—And as to being laughed at, or ridiculed, or, as I should expect, compared to that wild-goose man in the tales I used to read, who fell in love with a dead princess—I could not endure that;—therefore, on the whole, I think, I had better be quiet :—“ Study to be quiet,” was a precept he used, dear soul ! to impress very often on the St. Emerilians ;—and as I am one of them, I may take the advantage of obedience in this point.’

A little time had been lost in the deliberation ; but it was of importance to be circumspect at this moment ; and it was worth while to wait for the satisfaction it produced. Much, indeed, was not gained in information or conviction. Those who reason with Dumby for an opponent, or who talk, as did the deceased earl on one occasion, with the same personage for an auditor, may be made more obstinate and more confident, but seldom more candid, or more enlightened. Lady Lynford, consequently, having received no contradiction to her arguments, was more confirmed in their justness ; and though she felt some repugnance to using the implements which she had set in order for beginning to write, yet looking at her watch, she felt the necessity of exertion, and compelled herself to begin.

She tried to write gaily, and either her feeling or the sense of what she ought to have felt, made her, in language peculiarly coaxing, tell her guardian how unpleasant had been to her the increase of distance in her journey—how much she wished him with her—and how happy she must be to return to him. The events of her un-eventful progress resolved themselves into the alternations of stopping and proceeding ; and London, at present, afforded no subject but the surprise occasioned by Lady Drumcannon's remove, and the amusement forced upon her by Miss Wyerley's oddities, which she brought forward in luxuriance, as if to hide the general barrenness of her page. To gain a little praise under the consciousness that she deserved blame, she condescended to boast of her good taste, in deciding on turning over to Goody Parr, the office of summoner to dress-makers, milliners, and shoe-makers, still preserving to herself the pleasure of making a respectful distinction, by writing, herself, to the masters from whose instruction she hoped for improvement. She knew well that this would please the old man, who had great and due consideration for those possessing intellect, and who were compelled to forego its pleasures that they might live upon its wear and tear. She could endure an overplus-paragraph exhorting her to do that which she meant to do, if

she had but the comfort of seeing dear Meryon pleased with her—or, in truer language, if she could but hope herself unsuspected:—it was, but for this dictate of worldly prudence, rather beneath the high tone of Baroness Lynford's just pretensions, to resort to clap-traps, self-puffings, and plaudit-begging.

Drest very fitly for such an occasion, and at the hour which she had learnt would best suit Lady Drumcannon's cold, Lady Lynford went to her; and notwithstanding all the moderating influence of Miss Wyerley's hints, she could not but feel surprised at finding her chair set down, not in a hall in any degree resembling that of her own house, but in a wainscotted passage so narrow as to require nice steerage. Her man had announced her in the pitch suited to echoing flights of stairs—for at St. Emeril's there was never rusticity or relaxation of manners—the court there gave the tone; and what was allowed and done there, was rule—consequently every thing was done in the best manner.

But now, instead of the respectful silence, interrupted only by the alacrity of feet on her approach, she heard the vulgar reply of 'Very well,' when her title was comprehended, and the still more vulgar request of a small voice, 'Please just let a me go by, afore you let's the lady out,

or I can't get by.'—A dirty candlestick was taken from a table; and she stood on a damp mat, while the foot-boy, who had then scarcely got into his livery-coat, with the cape turned half down, and his cuffs turned up, proceeded before her. She heard herself proclaimed, as 'My lady;' and Miss Wyerley's reply of 'Lord! look at your coat! what a figure!' was audible. The lad now forgot his office in his own concern, and in vindication of his appearance, began to say, that 'he was just toasting the muffin, and so had slipt his coat-sleeves up.'—Then ensued a remonstrance on the impropriety of toasting the muffin so soon, and a prediction that it would be spoiled. This requiring a denial, Lady Lynford stood a fair chance of hearing warning to leave the place given and accepted; but Miss Wyerley's sense of propriety was victorious; and the messenger was sent back to desire her to walk up. Unconnected with this sordidness, she could have laughed—at liberty to retreat from it, she could have resented the being subjected to it: but, in her present circumstances, she felt indignant, not merely at what she was enduring, but at the will which enforced her submission to it.

Setting her features, and more anxious to inspire awe than she would have been on a fair ground, she entered loftily the small dingy ill-

lighted drawing-room, expecting to see the lady herself; but perceiving nothing that looked human except Miss Wyerley, she was going to take the seat pointed out to her; when instantly feeling the extreme closeness of the apartment, she moved towards the door, Miss Wyerley following her and chattering acquiescences with increased familiarity.

The seats being arranged, and the candles on the table snuffed, with a forbidding nod to the footboy, who would have performed the same good office for two finger's-lengths over the fire, Miss Wyerley was at leisure to account for, and Lady Lynford to understand, the absence of the viscountess—but this was not the subject exactly uppermost in the mind of the one. She began indeed, but it was in a tone of admiration, habitual to her when she descried any thing to be coveted.

‘ Why, my dear Lady L. what a pretty stripe you have got on ! Is that a Devonshire bargain ?—from Exeter I suppose—I believe there are very good shops in that town.—But upon my word, it was not necessary to be so quite in *gala*, as I say, to-night—any thing would have done for Lady D. and I—we are great economists—for *I* say that they who wear their best every day, will never have a best for Sundays—and now, once for all, my dear, take it for a standing rule, that any

thing will do for *us* when alone :—on party-nights, indeed, it is a different thing, but then we will let you know, of course. But shan't we see your nice friend Mrs. Parr?—that very nice woman—very nice indeed—I suppose a person as has seen better days, poor thing !'

' She must have had better luck than mortals in general,' replied Lady Lynford *stingingly*—' if she ever *did* see better.'

When we mean to provoke, it is sometimes as well not to be understood. — The baroness was justly offended at being turned down to the despicable dependent on her chaperon, and could, at the moment, have said any thing that would have given vent to her bitterness ; but happening to express herself in terms not quite in a straightforward direction, her auditor could only pause, as if to ask herself what this hypothetical conditionality meant.

She probably gave up the difficult construction—for she went on to ask what was Mrs. Parr's stipend.

There are people who will worm out what they want to know, and there are some who can point-blank ask any thing they do not know—Miss Wyerley had both powers.

Lady Lynford, in the most daunting way, looked her full in the face, and hoped to affront her

by a stigmatising gratification of her inquisitiveness. She seemed almost ready to express her surprise at being thus interrogated—but she had not space.

‘A very pretty sum indeed,’ answered Miss Wyerley, ‘and board and lodging, and her washing, and, I dare say, a fire in her own room.—A very pretty income—such as, I am sure, if *I* could hear of such a thing, *I* should be very glad of—for one ought to do something to save in these times—and, I dare say, a handsome provision on leaving :—a very pretty thing indeed.’

Making a very sudden pause in her chattering, she jumped up and went to something which the baroness had not yet been able perfectly to make out, as she sate at a distance from the fire, near which in a dark recess, bearing the appearance of a closet laid into the room, this shapeless mass was deposited.

Miss Wyerley, at the moment removing a large dirty shawl from the heap, discovered it to be a huge black leather easy-chair, in which was sunk, rather than seated or lying, a very old corpulent woman in deshabelle-mourning, not even her cap, neckerchief, *perruque*, and scarcely her face, affording a ray of reflected light. As she stirred into existence, Miss Wyerley snatched forward, and placed beside her, a small table on which lay

an ear-trumpet and a handkerchief—and bawling out a request to know ‘if she might ring for tea,’ and subjoining to it the information that ‘dear Lady L. was arrived;’ gave the baroness, at the same time, to understand that this personage was the lady whom she came to visit.

Rising and approaching the unfolding heap, which had yawned out the permission desired, Lady Lynford said to Miss Wyerley, ‘Why did you not tell me that this was Lady Druncannon?’

‘O dear me! I am always in the wrong box,’ replied she—‘what! didn’t you know her?—She was only just taking her nice little nap—I thought every body in London had known Lady D.—but I forgot quite.’

While the baroness was standing before her, the poor old soul was made to comprehend what she had to do and say. Tea came; and it was then evident that conversation could not be attempted; for Miss Wyerley was in too high business, and too loud jingle of cups and spoons, to speak or listen; and the ancient viscountess’s deafness, that evening, was perfect. A violent strangling cough came whenever she attempted to break through a raven-hoarseness, and ‘More sugar—‘Where’s *my* muffin?’—‘Bring *me* the cream-ewer—I’ll put it in *myself*’—were the longest

sentences her impeded utterance permitted.—Miss Wyerley's prate must, of necessity, be endured, with no other alleviation than her calls to move a footstool, or her evolutions among the candles ; and the visit ended with an interpreted delivery of Mr. Meryon's letter, and with no other new discovery, except that the designated chaperon was as little able to stand as to hear.

Before the baroness retired to rest, she added to the letter which she had begun to Mr. Meryon, a description of the sordidness she had encountered in her introductory visit :—she could not now laugh at it—she saw it in all its disgusting inconveniences, and foresaw no small uneasiness to herself from the ill-judged appointment to such an office, of a person so inefficient and so unfit. Mrs. Parr could only listen and echo—she was not a woman of suggestion and expedient, and rather felt sorrow and alarm on this occasion, connected with her own concerns, than sympathy in those of her distinguished charge.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FRIENDLY 'run-in,' or 'step-in,' from Miss Wyerley, next morning, from which Lady Lynford excused herself, by sending Mrs. Parr to hear what 'the odious creature' had to say, put in her power a fresh exertion of annoyance. Inquiring how the morning was disposed of, and hearing that the baroness was to be waited on by various persons, her sagacity told her, that some of these must be of a description admitting of her interference. Soon getting out of Goody Parr all she wanted to know, she contrived to give the most interesting of these the meeting, and with intolerable impertinence and presumption, professed herself now absolutely wanted as moderator between vender and purchaser. She was so afraid to trust people not used to London, if ever so high—she was an old practitioner—nay, she wished she had been a little let into dear Lady Lynford's plans,—and, if she had had her horses, she could have put her in a better way—but those same horses—aye, there was the thing!'

Nothing civil would answer the purpose of controlling such offensive vivacity.—The baroness

condescended to say repeatedly, 'You are too good—you take *too* much trouble.—We really can manage such trifles.'

Catching at the concluding word, she began to discuss the relative importance of trifles ; and as if Lady Lynford was using delicacy in the concealment of natural foible, she kindly informed her that 'variety *in* young people, and rouge *on* them, were two things which she always liked to see.'

There was an axiomatic terseness, and a happy antithesis in this sentiment, which, perhaps, gave it, to the person uttering it, the zest of novel wisdom ; but the thing had been said before, and by one of her own sex, who had lived long enough to know better :—neither the folly nor the immorality of it, was therefore Miss Wyerley's exclusive property, though the uttering left her little better than the coiner.

It was beneath Lady Lynford to lay siege to an enemy entrenched in a mud-fortress. She only replied, by quoting her own opinion of herself, that she was too proud to be vain.—'I am very proud, I confess,' said she, intending by this condescension to intimidate—'it may meet its cure in time,' added she sighing, as if at the very moment feeling degradation. 'Perhaps so,' said Miss Wyerley, with appropriate absurdity.—'But,' continued she—seeing even Mrs. Parr

smile, and feeling that she must get off this hollow ground instantly—‘that same guardian of yours—some queer old creature, I take for granted—’t was such a letter he wrote to Lady D. about you—all about I can’t tell what, but all sorts of goodness.’

The milliner was introduced, and glancing at the lady whom she was to serve, she put on manners so very respectful, so proper to meet those of Lady Lynford, that Miss Wyerley thought herself bound, in common compassion, to use all her softening facilitations, and suffered her good intentions to lead her into an assurance to the well-behaved gentlewoman, that ‘dear Lady L. would not eat her.’

The baroness’s colouring answered all purposes; and now a new astonishment seized the officious help-mate. When she saw Lady Lynford easily suited in her choice, perfectly able to give her orders, and not condescending to haggle for price, she could be silent no longer—she began to remonstrate; but she was not listened to. Instead of replying to her, Lady Lynford talked across her; and as if to silence her, and make one general settlement, she said to her milliner—‘You have worked for me before, while I have been at a distance—you will soon see my taste, now I am near—and I do not wish to change, if I am satis-

fied.—I must have the best materials, and the best fashion—you must be punctual—and my bill must be sent with every completed order. As I pay ready money, and never ask abatement, I expect to be charged a fair price—and, for your own sake, remember that I am now a minor, and that where once my confidence is forfeited, I never can restore it.'

Miss Wyerley confessed she 'never, in all her life, did hear or see such a way of going to market.'—She would have dragged 'her la'aship' aside, 'to tell her la'aship, that she would be ruined on this plan'—but 'her la'aship' had neither ears to listen nor elbows to be plucked.—With her stately tread, she left the room; and between the attractions of band-boxes, and the duty which she fancied incumbent on her, the poor officious soul was at a loss to decide whether she should stay with the milliner, or retreat with the baroness. She contrived to do both; and having satisfied first her small curiosity, and tried without success to recommend herself to notice and a bargain, by assuming the merit of directing Lady Lynford, she joined her, in time to ask her 'who taught her to give orders to such people.'

'My guardian'—answered the baroness in a tone of comic simplicity—'the queer old creature, as you call Mr. Meryon.'

‘How did *he* ever learn to bespeak bonnets, and such things?’ asked Miss Wyerley.

‘He never learnt,’ said Lady Lynford in a meek tone, as if ready to be crushed, but at the same moment rising from the seat on which she was sitting, and looking any way, except toward Miss Wyerley, she repeated with ineffable contempt—‘*He* never learnt indeed to bespeak bonnets, but having a mind that comprehends great things, it includes small ones.—He has laid down for me honourable rules of proceeding, and I am not naturally inclined to any other.’

‘O dear!’ exclaimed Miss Wyerley, as if affrighted—‘dear Lady L. you quite puzzle my poor brains—I am no philosopheress, nor blue-stocking—pray explain yourself in plain English, or I shall go wild.’

If Lady Lynford laughed at this absurdity, it was not because it amused her. The little she wanted of allowance to decide on her own judgment, did not incapacitate her from forming a very correct opinion of all that vulgar declamation which assists ignorance and effrontery, by decrying what is in itself valuable.—Many must have been the female minds which have been kept in the trammels of nonsense, and consigned to the inanities of dress and cards, on the discouragement given to pursuits of more than merely moral im-

portance, by the prostituted word ‘philosophy,’ and the odious indelicate vulgarism of ‘blue-stocking.’ Against female pedantry—against insolent pretensions in the inferior sex, to rival their masters—against pert conceit and obtruded wisdom, too much can never be said—no mortification can be too strong an opposition—but to brand with degrading sarcasm, the industry of those who neglect no duty, and whom affluence leaves at leisure to improve their faculties—to give notice, when a few elegant persons are invited together, that it is ‘a blue-stocking meeting,’ is oftener the indulgence of malice than of any better feeling, and can have no other tendency than to drive the younger part of society, like the small fry of a fishery, into the net of unstatutable meshes, from which every law in defence of morals and manners, ought to preserve them.

No one could feel this more justly than the Baroness Lynford. She appreciated highly her own advantages; and rendered thoroughly aware of what she owed to the De Quintes, by the superior additions Mr. Meryon had made to it, it was no part of her intention to descend from her altitude in her subsequent modes of life. She had ceased long from juvenile attempts to astonish: she understood too well what she had attained, to measure height with giants. She meant to use

her advantages to encourage, to patronize, and to reward ; and perhaps to preserve in its fullest extent, the power to do this, was, next to the proximate feeling of repelling obtrusion, the most lively stimulus to her ardent mind.

Obeying Miss Wyerley's demand of an explanation, evidently with a view to place herself still farther out of her reach, she said, ' I will tell you what my good guardian would have said, had I asked him about my bonnet. He would have said, " Have a new bonnet, and let it be handsome, in compliance with the precept, to provide things honest in the sight of all men." '

Lady Lynford knew perfectly at what stair the poor woman would stumble—she therefore stopt to watch her in full sprawl of misconception, and was not disappointed.

' Yes, I understand—buy a thing and pay for it—and then it is your own—that is honest—and, as I say, there's no other way of being honest—for, as to taking people's goods and never paying for them, as I say, people may just as well go at once upon the highway.'

' Why, you do not suppose, I hope, that by *honest*, the apostle meant, in this place, *just*.'

' O ! no, to be sure—but what did he mean then ?'

' You may well ask,' Lady Lynford could have

said—for her ideas of her new friend's honesty were not raised by her reply of 'O! no, to be sure.'—But she used forbearance on principle here, and mildly said, 'By *honest*, here I am to understand *decent*, *becoming*.'—

'Aye, becoming—I am always for the becoming—though some people say the fashionable is better than the becoming.'

'This injunction, he would say, makes it a point of conscience, in *my* situation to be drest handsomely.—And he would say, I must not drive people to abate in their price, because I am to be liberal after my power: and even in just expectations he would forbid me to be too strict, because it was to guard against this extremity of right, that the Jews were forbidden to glean the corners of their fields—thus, you see, out of my bonnet he would make a lesson.—Now, as to my care for myself, in which you seem to think me so remiss—I shall soon find out when I am imposed on; and to *that*, I shall no more readily submit, than you would.—Punctuality I have a right to demand, because I shall observe it;—and as to paying ready money, I could bring you half a dozen strong arguments—one is enough—it is doing as, in a change of places, I should wish others to do by me.—If I had to pay others, I should expect to be paid;—if I were not, I could

not carry on business. I told her I was under age—perhaps—I believe—for the great pleasure of being candid.’

Miss Wyerley’s every-day genius could have interrupted the baroness in many of her pauses—but she had just now a sort of holyday-feeling which restrained her; and she was so charmed with what she heard—it was such novelty and such delight to her, to hear good language delivered in a fine voice and dignified attitude, that though perhaps she comprehended little of the deduction, she was in raptures with the sounds, and in her admiration, stopt but just short of begging ‘her la’aship’ to say it over again—or at least to favour dear Lady D. with a repetition of it, as soon as the departing of her cold restored her power of hearing.

‘O dear me! now we shall have another charming scene,’ said she, when the still more important personage, the dress-maker, was announced, and, at the same time, the mercer attended with goods adapted to the highest excitation of envy and covetousness in the breasts of this world’s younger daughters—‘Well, I must just come and hear what she will say now—I dare say something finer still; for gowns are better than bonnets to talk about.’

The first surprise was that ‘her la’aship’ was not fond of pink, and nothing else—that she did not like the showiest things best, and that she consider-

ed things at a distance.’—Here it was almost hopeless to explain—the taste must have been given, to be understood.—The mercer comprehended; and that must suffice.—But in directions for make and fashion, Miss Wyerley, with all her admiration, could not trust the baroness entirely—she must indeed beg for ‘a little of the smart—she was such an advocate for a little smartness—a pretty contrast—a light fashion—a thing with an air.’—It was impossible to get on till she was silenced.

‘Wherever fashion allows me a choice,’ said the baroness, ‘I prefer the simplest style—such as painters like—I do not love frittered ornament or fanciful *petitesse*—but I would not be picturesque at the expense of propriety—For court, I will be superb, without ostentation—in public, I will be splendid—for all lower occasions I will be decorous, delicate, and, at all times, exquisitely neat.’

Miss Wyerley now in exultation clapped her hands, and shouted ‘Bravo! bravo!’ and so ended her ecstatic treat, and she could then, as she said, ‘make shift to tear herself away, to be in time for dear Lady D.’s rising.—Interviews with instructors were not in her line—she had no vote in art or science:—drawing was a demand on patience which she could not endure—her singing and dancing days were, as she observed, over; and languages, in the

very mention, brought back the grammars and dictionaries of her boarding-school, to her galled remembrance.

The next visit to Lady Drumcannon was made by daylight ; and her cold having abated, and the rheumatic affection which had so increased her other disabilities, having subsided, she again drest, and with the help of a little crutch-headed stick, *toddled* about her apartments, giving great hopes that, by the time when Lady Lynford's equipage was in fit order, and her dress in readiness, she should be able to execute her office decently. She appeared so fond of it, that nothing was to be apprehended from her want of inclination ; and the baroness told her guardian, that ' though nothing could make the six months pleasant, she saw no obstacle to the fulfilment of the purpose attached to them. Lady Drumcannon was determined on a busy spring ; and by an arrangement which should substitute the house in Grovesnor-square for the more frugal abode in the adjoining street, she might enjoy all the advantages of London introduction and society.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE baroness's horses and carriage were in order—her ladyship was, even to Miss Wyerley's satisfaction, well drest; and, with a very proper feeling, she made her *entrée* in this department of life at her parish-church, and in her family-pew. Lady Drummannon had offered herself—‘seldom indeed, as she observed, ‘she ventured to risque a church—but yet, on *this* occasion, she certainly would—and Miss Wyerley was, she knew, quite and always at her service.’—But the incurred risque was declined, and the officiousness repressed, by the baroness's firm resolution to be accompanied by no one but Mrs. Parr.

Perhaps this Sunday was the prime day of Lady Lynford's youth, in worthiness. Mr. Meryon had sent her to London with a halo of goodness round her—the world had not yet touched her: her judgment, though not matured, was clear and unsophisticated—she had a strong perception of good, a natural abhorrence of evil—which by excellent management had been rescued from the obliterating influence that had endangered them—she had every motive to do right, no temptation to do

wrong ; and even her very faults were convertible into advantages, if well directed.

With great good taste as well as laudable feeling, she avoided all extreme in this her first step—she did not affect humility, by exposing herself to public gaze, in walking to church—she went as became her. Her deportment was dignified towards the world, submissive to her Creator—perhaps a little complacent towards herself—but this, under such peculiar circumstances, might be forgiven.

Had Goody Parr been a woman of cultivated mind, or even of that common good sense which so often puts to shame and discomfiture, artificial cultivation, there was excuse for any little self-gratulation which she might have felt in attending on such an occasion, her whom she had had the privilege of teaching that there was a superior Power to be worshipped.—Goody, indeed, felt disposed to cry—but she could not exactly tell at what ; and the disposition seemed, even to her own perceptions, inconsistent with the occasion, when ‘ the dear creature looked so well, so handsome, and all her new clothes fitted her so very nicely !’

Established now in her form of life at home, and only waiting Lady Drumcannon’s perfect recovery to take her station amongst the first persons in the kingdom, she stood, in every point indeed,

an enviable creature. The impulse given to her mind by good habits, continued ; and she devoted the first half-hour of the day to her religious duties, the second to exercise on foot, if the weather admitted of it—her first hours after breakfast to her accomplishments ; and was then at leisure to receive the visits of those who were now young candidates for the world's best gifts, but who had been the early companions of her childhood. She had soon a torrent of morning-calls, invitations, and attentions ; but the homage of St. James's was the first point ; and the drawing-rooms then being fixed and frequent, nothing was wanting but the ability of Lady Drummannon, who was already well enough to have her little evening-parties at home, and by dint of *rouge* and trumpet and stick, looked, and listened, and shuffled about very tolerably.

And now that gentle negotiator of others' affairs, Miss Wyerley, had the pleasure of announcing to her dear Lady L. that ' the point-lappets were looked out, and that by the next Thursday se'nnight, which was the first drawing-room, she must be prepared, after which ceremony she must look on herself as completely launched in the vortex of dissipation, as dear Lady D. loved gaiety to her heart.'

Lady Lynford's days were sufficiently eventful to make her letters to her guardian very amusing—

she filled her sheet rapidly, and sent it off: his replies were such as made the breaking his seal a matter of impatience—he commended—he encouraged—he exhorted;—and he returned with affectionate warmth, all her longing for the day that was to end their separation.

Of Lady Drumcannon she spoke, without disguise, her genuine opinion, which every day grew more and more unfavourable, as increased acquaintance unveiled the crafty finessing of a poverty which the baroness was almost tempted to think exaggerated in representation, if not wholly feigned: her contrivances to get carried about—her spunging for dinners—her paltry address in avoiding necessary expense—and her indulgence in favourite expenses, all tended to undermine a character that, though never claiming much respect, might have ‘dwelt in decencies,’ if she would have been quiet.

But the most disgusting circumstance to the baroness in this necessary intimacy, was her incessant exposure to meeting a man of a very low clerical order, who considered himself as Lady Drumcannon’s domestic chaplain, and on whom the sun of her piety shone with undivided warmth. He had been recommended to her by the care and assiduity of good Miss Wyerley, who thought that, ‘that nice young man the reverend Mr. Bray, would be a nice person to officiate to her and dear Lady

D. when they could not get to chapel'—that is to say, when nobody's coach had spare corners;—a little dark third room, therefore, on the drawing-room floor, was fitted up after Miss Wyerley's taste, 'into a nice little chapel,' and, with no small deviation from decency, and almost a mockery of religion which nothing but ignorance could excuse, appropriated occasionally to the purpose of divine worship—at other times, it was hung round with gowns and petticoats.

The convenience of such an establishment soon recommended it to frequent use; and the reverend Mr. Bray read the service of the church and preached, every Sunday, at an hour convenient to the duty of a small curacy which he held, a few miles from London. Occasional prayers and edifying lectures were volunteered on week-days; and having submitted once to hear him, Lady Lynford was enabled to represent his natural endowments, his acquired learning, and his spiritual doctrine, as of the very lowest description. His knowledge of his own interest indeed was far, very far, from contemptible; and if shrewdness and cunning could have passed with Lady Lynford for knowledge and wisdom, he might have imposed on her; but every day increased her dislike to him and her suspicion of him; and the devotion of the viscountess, and the fawning sycophancy of her

dependant, instead of raising their idol in her estimation, brought them both down still lower in it.

Had Lady Lynford seen any advantage in this substitution for the public honour due to the Almighty, she might have considered it as a pitiable resource ;—but she knew that the old lady slept at her devotions; and she saw that she could go, if any body would take her, to morning-amusements, which lasted as long, and exposed her to as much risque of catching cold, as any church. In her fondness for carriage-exercise, she would have gone the round of her apothecary or physician. She fastened herself upon all the shopping and marketing ladies of her acquaintance, and, excepting places not of free admission, there was no door which she could not open to hear or see that which would help off with an hour. Then, as to the effect produced on her moral character and private practice :—nothing good could be expected from the exhortation of a teacher so shackled :—his preaching was *extempore*, and it was no very culpable suspicion if the baroness was half convinced that Miss Wyerley gave hints of expedient subjects, and warned him against such as circumstances made unsuitable. At least, the very strong dose of ‘ conversion,’ and the denunciation against those whom his reasoning did not convert, which

characterized the one sermon she had submitted to hear, left room to conjecture, that her company had been expected.

The distinction, if intended, was lost on her. Could she, or any one of a mind at all cultivated, sit with patience to hear, in defence of religious ignorance, that ‘empty vessels were best prepared to receive large communications’—or those on whom he laid on thick, that common charge of the vulgar, pride, characterized as behaving to others, ‘as if they were not worthy to be named in the same day with themselves?’—No exaggeration is here used: this is language to which, by degrees, and by an insensible departure from the established church, persons higher in rank than old cormorant Drummannon, as high-minded as the baroness, and as learned as her guardian, may, by debasing their faculties, familiarize their ears.

Lady Drummannon being now nearly in her usual state of *wellness*—for health, does not express her mode of existence—Lady Lynford saw her, what she really was, and was as intimately acquainted with her occupations, as the season of the year permitted. She breakfasted in bed, rose late, was long in dressing, took refreshment, ‘got taken out,’ or received visitors, and murdered time till she was to dress for dinner:—sleep and cards, if nothing better than Lady Lynford offered, led her on

to bed-time, unless Mr. Bray's official charities interposed. A back-parlour and the adjoining closet were given up to him for bed-room and study; and neither his books nor his bed were in danger of injury for want of his presence. But when Lady Lynford, who was not particularly prone to reflection, but whose sagacity frequently overleapt all the intermediate deduction of a meditative mind, and pounced upon a latent truth, asked herself what was the visible effect produced on the old lady's principles or practice, by this parody on a religious establishment, she could hardly imagine, that the subtraction of it, had it occurred, would have been perceived. Selfish, lazy, gluttonous, censorious, and pleading poverty whenever she apprehended any design on her purse, she yet talked of virtues as if she practised them, and without any feeling nearer to Christian charity, than a disposition to annihilate the distinctions between worth and worthlessness, and to apologize for the profligate and licentious, she presumed to hold herself up as an example of informed opinion.

It might have been thought, that Mr. Bray's attendance would at least have rescued the Sunday from disgrace; but this was a mistake in which the baroness was not suffered to repose; for, on her charitably offering to devote a Sunday evening to the viscountess, her prime-minister was driven to be ingenuous, by saying, 'But, perhaps, my dear Lady L.

with your strict notions, if poor Lady D. should want her little picquette, to keep her awake, for Sunday is often a long day with us,—you might not like it,—and, as I say, what would that queer friend of yours, as I shall always call him, say, if you looked at the knave of hearts on a Sunday?—*we* don't mind it—but, in the country, and so far off, I know it is another thing.—Poor Lady D. is a very good sort of religious woman: she has a great deal of religion—I don't know any body that has more—indeed, she was quite noticed last year at the Octagon at Bath—stayed sacrament, and every thing;—but still, you know, she must have her way; and so, I believe, have most people.'

'The cross, embroidered on a leprous garment!' thought Lady Lynford, in silence, while Miss Wyerley was shaking fingers to depart.—'Whatever may be my faults or my errors, Great God! defend me from this pestilential sin of living in the base indulgences of the world, and boasting myself thy servant:—when I offend thee, let me forget thee—but never, never let me dare to say, I know thee, fear thee, love thee, while my heart is brutalized by low vices!'

The very frequent intercourse, which, of necessity, subsisted between the houses of the viscountess and baroness, rendered the intimacy of weeks

as informing as that of so many months ; and Lady Lynford, not without some increase of her habitual contempt for Goody Parr, saw the strengthening friendship that had rooted itself in her mind towards Miss Wyerley. There was a similarity in their situation of second-rank personages, which produced sympathy : they could talk to each other without any painful sense of disparity. Mrs. Parr could brag of the confidential situation she had, for years, held at St. Emeril's Court, and the high appreciation in which she had stood with the late earl ; and Miss Wyerley could interest still more deeply, by representing what ought to have been her situation, had not the late viscount been a man rather of promises than performances. A fine field was opened for the pathetic, in the sorrows of her injured mother ; and Mrs. Parr, by patient listening, purchased the right to be heard, when she talked a little at large of her father's property, of the goodly land of Canaan in which she had been reared, and the garden of Eden, from which her father's death had exiled her. With that love of liberty which slavery keeps alive, Miss Wyerley would take opportunities of private intercourse with Mrs. Parr, while their principals were occupied ; and each now congratulated herself on having, *at last*, found a sincere friend.

But not even the discovery of this underplot in

the drama of her own life, could induce the baroness to forbear her cutting sarcasms against the viscountess and her dependant. She cared not how far they went; and, when once in possession of the loves of Goody Parr and Miss Wyerley, in all their fond extent, she inflicted, without mercy, on the former, all that ridicule and contempt could make her feel. But she had borne too much and too long to wince now; and though the predilection for the miniature-picture was sufficiently understood to have been made use of in self-defence, she prudently, as to herself, though not very honestly in her official capacity, heard all, saw all, and felt all, and yet kept silence.—A firm, gentle appeal to Mr. Meryon, stating the merit of her endurance under this abatement of perfect respect, might—or it might not—have saved some uneasiness.

Lady Lynford's letters to Mr. Meryon were always duly and affectionately answered; and they showed how little necessary is the bustle of life to the supply of the mind. She felt ashamed of her hurried chronicles, and her rapid succession of facts and images, when she read his continuous paragraph—and saw it, without the least departure from what seemed necessary, brought to a close so melodious, that it might have claimed the praise of oratory.—‘Why cannot I write like dear M.?’ she

would say—‘O! why is not my mind sweetly tuned like his?—why are not my thoughts as calm, as heavenly?—May my last end, whenever it comes, be like what his will be!—but then I must think—and think betimes.—I do not much love to think—but I can do without it—perhaps the disposition will come in time:—it is a wide world before me.’

In his last letter, having reported his proceedings in some of her affairs, preparatory to her coming of age, he spoke with kind feelings of the sudden death of his curate, Mr. Holby, whose life had been too precarious to make the event a surprise; and as at present he had no need of assistance, and the widow and her little daughter were content to remain where they were, he thankfully acknowledged, that his domestic comforts would not be diminished materially.

To this communication, Lady Lynford was immediately replying, urged by that kindness of regard, which made whatever affected her guardian’s situation, important to her.—She was writing, with more than even her wonted expedition, when her drawing-master was announced; and, always respectful in her manners towards those whose abilities she used, she begged his patience while she concluded her letter. To beguile his time of waiting, and, perhaps, to gain a little applause,

seeing the copy which she had made of the miniature-picture in a corner of her writing-table, she put it into his hand, avowing it her own work. He was very liberal in his commendation, and expressed some surprise at her never having spoken of her proficiency in this delicate branch of his art ; but when, to keep curiosity at bay, she told him that it was the personage known in England by the name of the young Pretender, he shook his head, saying, ‘ No, no—this is not the Pretender—I know the pictures of him perfectly well. Whoever it is, the subject must have been fine ; and the picture is remarkably well painted, and does your ladyship the highest credit.—But surely,’ added he, ‘ your ladyship should not keep such an ornament in your writing-table—in the way in which it is now secured, it might be put into a frame, and it should hang up in your *boudoir*. Hang it out of the reach of the sun—and if you are afraid for your colours, put a little green silk curtain before it—it can come to no harm.’

And here occurred another inconvenience attendant on her departure from habitual ingenuousness. She would have rejoiced in telling Mr. Meryon how highly any performance of hers had been praised, because she knew it would have given him pleasure ;—but, having begun with concealment, she was forced to go on : and painfully,

when, as now, her natural wish was so thwarted, did she feel the incipient verification of his parting prediction.—‘I am, indeed,’ said she, ‘getting into a labyrinth—but I cannot now help it.’

Her drawing-master’s suggestion had flattered and gratified her; and in a few days, this pretender, whoever he was, was hung up safely in a small room which she kept exclusively to herself, and, in fitting up which, her principal aim was to have a retreat from the impertinence of Miss Wyerley.

The first appointment for her presentation at court, Lady Drummannon had been obliged to defer; but the Monday preceding the important Thursday, arrived without bringing any danger of a second delay, but what arose from Lady Lynford’s having a slight cold, caught, not at church, or by any fair exposure, but in the stove-heat of the viscountess’s drawing-room. That she might be recovered by the Thursday, she submitted to take a little more than her usual care, and therefore resolved to confine herself to the *boudoir*.

The day turning out wet, she thought herself tolerably safe from intrusion. She gave orders to be excused from admitting visitors, on the plea of her cold, and she hoped that a note to Lady Drummannon, would stand instead of a visit to her, and, together with the pouring rain, stave off Miss Wy-

erley: but there is neither unfit day nor unfit weather in the calendar of some people, and the very hint that she wished to be left alone, brought Miss Wyerley. Affecting a jocular surprise which *must* be agreeable, she only begged to be told where 'her dear la'aship' was, and then on tiptoe, as if fearing the stone-stairs should creak with her weight, she softly opened the door of the room, and putting in her face with the archness of a Cupid hiding his bow, she left Mrs. Parr, who was just quitting the room, to close the door, and seated herself in a chair opposite the baroness's, with the emphatical sentence, 'Well, here I am come—and a fine wet figure I am!'

Nothing could be more disagreeable to Lady Lynford than the effrontery of this utter want of all attention to her wishes or welfare; and she was not a little inclined to bid her stand off, in consideration of the indisposition, to nurse which she had secluded herself—but now a noisy admiration was added to a determined purpose of keeping her ground; and having never before been admitted into this apartment, which of course she vulgarized and made guilty of profanation, by calling it 'the Sanctum Sanctorum,' she was all astonishment and exclamation.

No terms were strong enough to express her raptures in seeing what was intended to be seen;

but had the objects been infinite in number and unrivalled in value, they must all have yielded, in interest, to that which she could not see. The little green silk curtain caught her eye, and here was an attraction stronger than any thing evident could offer.

Lady Lynford, under the influence of her indisposition, was not less irritable than usual; and under the additional provocation of this violent intrusion, it would have been a stretch of her self-command hardly to be asked of her, had she treated her tormentor merely with silent contempt. Yet, under the improved discipline of her later years, she might have accomplished this seeming victory, would Miss Wyerley only have been quiet—but quiet she could never be; and her inquisitiveness once excited, she was disposed to run any risque for its satisfaction.

To this violation of all decorum, the baroness was determined not to submit. She rose, and extended her arm as a barrier against the intruder, saying, firmly and authoritatively, that, ‘though the question was one of perfect indifference, she saw that a stand must somewhere be made against the grossest ill-manners she had ever been exposed to.’—Silencing all the subterfuges of her opponent, and sneering at all the affectations of gawky ignorance and youthful innocence, which she now

assumed, she proceeded to plain truths; and as she warmed, not condescending to veil her anger in wit and sarcasm, she uttered her genuine feeling of that indiscretion, which by consigning her to the temporary protection of a superannuated woman, had eventually turned her over to a grovelling dependant, whose insolence was every day growing more and more intolerable. She had too much the advantage in truth and power, to have any thing to apprehend from a reply. None was attempted, but by passionate tears; and when these began to flow, she ordered the fountain to seat herself in the chair nearest the door, and to stir at her peril, unless to go out of the house for ever.

There was now no resource but in hysterics—to go was never to return—to remain passive was to sign her own condemnation; and she was too much galled to seek the healing of forgiveness immediately. Lady Lynford's nerves were very firm; and the generosity of her nature did not include any weakness of compassion. When the kicking and squeaking began, she rang the bell, and ordered the servant who answered it, to send Mrs. Parr.—It seemed the best course she could pursue; it was more considerate to the sex of the offender than ordering the footmen to show her out; and to endure her company on such terms, was not

to be expected of any one who had an option.—But, alas ! a worse step the young peeress could scarcely have taken.

Mrs. Parr was never wanting in obedient alacrity. As she entered the room, looking anxiously round, as if hearing indistinctly something alarming, and seeing Miss Wyerley in such rueful plight, her feelings were divided between compassion for her seeming suffering, and concern for Lady Lynford's exposure to an unpleasant accident.—Looking first to the baroness for her commands, or for explanation, she received her orders to remove Miss Wyerley, who had, she said, 'most unpardonably affronted her.'—'I only,' cried the culprit—'I only just asked to look at that beautiful picture with the curtain before it—I'm sure I did not mean to do wrong or give offence—but I suppose it is some great secret, since I must n't see it.'

'It is a great secret,' said Lady Lynford tauntingly, 'and one into which you are never likely to be let:—I will tell you this for your satisfaction—it is a beautiful miniature of my own painting—*beautiful—beautiful*—and it is of a *man* too—and a *young* man, and a *beautiful* man—and you shall not see it—so be gone, if you please—Mrs. Parr, do take her away, for she has made my head ache worse than it did before.'

Mrs. Parr had no choice of behaviour in the

execution of this order. To have laid additional opprobrium on the culprit, would only have rendered it more difficult to herself, and more distressing to her principal. She therefore coaxed, and nodded, and winked, and answered for the good intentions of both parties, at the same time, and with laudable propriety, seeming to give her whole weight to the support of Lady Lynford's dignity and right. Some little concession she induced Miss Wyerley to make, to save herself from a sentence of banishment, which, to accelerate her retreat, the baroness accepted, with nothing more than contempt and disdain.

Left alone, and as her anger cooled, she could not but foresee the probable consequences of this small disturbance. What she had said to Miss Wyerley she could not suppose she would conceal from Lady Drummannon; and as, even if fairly repeated, it contained expressions which she must have despised any one for pardoning, she considered their connexion as drawing to its close in the most violent way. Having exhausted her anger, and not inclined a second time to disturb herself, she could immediately decide on the most perfect coolness in any subsequent proceeding; and had she had only her own tastes to consult, glad would she have been to renounce all inter-

course with two such personages as the viscountess and her dependant.

But the next situation in which she saw herself, was that of writing to Mr. Meryon on the subject—and what must she then say was the proximate cause of this rupture?

Spirited up by her recent provocation, and not having yet come to that recoil of feverishness which brings dejection, she saw in this accident the means of ridding herself of the one uneasiness that oppressed her. She had only to make light of the matter—to say, as if now just recollecting the unimportant circumstance, that having hung up in her *boudoir* a copy, which, years before, she had made of the picture used to impose upon her, she would not submit it to the impertinent scrutiny of Miss Wyerley; and thus advantage might be taken of an accident, which seemed to have occurred on purpose.

She kept quiet all the remainder of the day, dined where she was, did not dress, and at Mrs. Parr's earnest persuasion, in consideration of the approaching Thursday, retired to rest, three hours before her usual time.

Now what advantage did Mrs. Parr make of this early retirement?—Why, she invited Miss Wyerley, who was at home and alone, and not very gay in spirits, to come and sit with her in the

breakfast-parlour; and in the course of the visit, knowing that the baroness, if awake, could not hear what passed in the *boudoir*, she gratified the poor woman with the sight of ‘the beautiful miniature,’ and told her all she could tell—that is to say, all she knew or had heard, or could suppose, of the picture itself, and the baroness’s attachment to it.—The good office was not without return—Miss Wyerley happened to have some reciprocity in her power, and could tell her that which made it almost incumbent on her, to reveal the weak and little short of treacherous compliance into which she had suffered her indiscretion to lead her.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Mrs. Parr's solicitude for Lady Lynford's health, naturally carried her to her bed-side, as soon as she rang her bell in the morning. Her cold was perhaps a little impeded in its retreat, by the disturbance of her mind; but still it was not important enough to excite fears for the Thursday—neither did its stupifying effect prevent her ladyship's perceiving signs of unusual uneasiness, twinkling amongst the uncharacterized features of Goody Parr—‘What is the matter with you?’ said the baroness—‘you look, Goody, just now, very much as I remember your doing, when you and I were contending for the sceptre, or rather when I had seized it, and you did not know how to get it back again.’

Goody Parr tried to smile, but it was the resistance of sunshine against a thunder-storm.

‘I hope you are not concerning yourself in my yesterday's skirmish with that most contemptible of all reptiles:—I tell you fairly, Goody—I will go back to St. Emeril's, and wait there till I can introduce myself, rather than I will again, for an hour, submit to that wretch—or I believe I may say, to

the old *scarabæus* of a viscountess—I dare say the old woman will be heinously offended—and so she may well be, if she has a spark of decent sense ;—as to the other, I should not wonder if she popt out of the tea-pot when I go to breakfast, and was ready with one of her fine orations of “ My dear,” and “ Dear me.”—She is capable of any thing.’

‘ Poor thing !’ sighed out Mrs. Parr.

‘ Poor thing ?’ repeated Lady Lynford in a very different tone—‘ if you begin poor-thinging her, take care of yourself, Goody.—You would look rather foolish, if I were to set off for St. Emeril’s without you, and leave you to stay here till my birth-day, and then send you word that I wanted no more of your services—I dare say my father’s will leaves me as much liberty as that.’

Mrs. Parr bit her lips—either she saw that it was no time for contradiction, or she was not, just then, in spirits to contradict. Submission was the safest path, and this for the present she took.

But however accustomed to it, she could not long pursue it. Having been employed, part of the morning, in affairs of which the baroness desired to avoid all cognisance, she rushed into the *boudoir* where Lady Lynford was beguiling her cold with the happy resource of needle-work, and dashing down on her knees, in the middle of the carpet, she sobbed out the most contrite entreaties

for forgiveness.—Lady Lynford could have laughed ; but she put by her mirth to satisfy her curiosity.

Broken sentences, sufficient to have made up a tolerably long speech, concluded with a confession that she had shown the picture to Miss Wyerley.

In the most impetuous of Baroness Lynford's days, Mrs. Parr had never seen her indignation so excited ; and that she had attracted it towards herself, was an overwhelming aggravation of proportionate terror. The poor woman might have been expected to do any thing desperate, under her present necessary feeling—but she did nothing. She had risen from her supplicating posture, when she had made her confession, and now she stood, with tolerable firmness and with a countenance that seemed to say, ' Rage on—I am prepared for every thing.'

' And I suppose, from this time, I am then to look on you, Mrs. Parr, as the friend of this object of my abhorrence—if you can have acted in this manner, any confidence of mine must have been entirely misplaced—I cannot retract what I have given, however I may repent it—but to give no more, is in my own power—henceforward, I shall regard you, and you must regard yourself, as in a very different situation with respect to me.—You may be upper-housekeeper, overseer, any

thing you please in a subordinate capacity, but never my friend, nor ever my companion when I can rid myself of you.'

'As your ladyship pleases—I can bear all this, and much more, for your sake, Lady Lynford.'

'My sake? it is for your own sake—you have been taking lessons from that piece of washed leather, your friend Miss Wyerley.—Are you not ashamed of imitating what you know I so heartily despise?'

'I do not imitate her—I am thinking only of your ladyship.'

'*My* ladyship? you had better think of yourself, and ask where you shall hide your stupid head six months hence; for you may be assured Mr. Meryon shall know the fidelity of your service to me.'

The baroness paused—Mrs. Parr waited, as if to know whether she meant to proceed. Finding she did not continue to speak, the poor woman seemed almost, by the very act of shaking herself, to shake off her fears, and then with unaccountable composure said:—

'Lady Lynford, I need no reproaches, no hard expressions, to make me sensible of my own wants, or of my good fortune in having been so long permitted to attend you:—I have confessed myself wrong—I know I have done wrong—I have

been led aside from my duty by the pleasure of having what I thought a friend—but though I deserve all you have said or can say, my heart does not sink:—I have told you the truth—and the truth gives me the courage to tell you—and I hope, without any disrespect, that you never will again repeat the words with which you have tried to wound me, nor will you ever disclose to Mr. Meryon the fault I have been guilty of—no, not even if I were to make it ten times greater:—leave me as you threaten—turn me out of your house this hour—I will submit, if I may first speak ten words.’

‘ Say then,’ said her ladyship in a tone of command.

‘ If I refused till you entreated me,’ replied Mrs. Parr, ‘ I believe I should be justified.’

‘ I shall not ask you again.’

Goody Parr had hitherto sustained her part in the dialogue well—and often she had flattered those most interested in her useful qualities, that, at length, her good sense had reached a point from which it could not slip back—but she never failed to smear her neatest performances with some awkward brandishing of her brush ; and now all her accurate outlines and broad lights were run into one muddled mass, by a flood of tears which she shed on the shoulder of her dear charge, while, in

the most ungraceful attitude and manner, not at all like that in which she had pleaded her cause, she sobbed out—‘ Miss Wyerley—knows—she knows whose—the the the miniature-picture is.’

‘ You do not say so !’—said Lady Lynford, hoping to hear *more*, but not suffering herself to ask for it.

It was now Goody’s turn to be coy—she began aloud to bewail herself, at the moment when she knew she had less cause for it than ever ; and under the semblance of the most excessive agitation, and as if fearing some crushing stroke, she glided out of the apartment, leaving the baroness to repeat and ruminate on the few words she had made the most conspicuous in her declaration.

Liberty to think without interruption was, in the present juncture, so valuable, that Lady Lynford contented herself in solitude.—She gave orders to be excused from all visitors—and then calling back the servant who had taken the commission, she qualified her command by saying—‘ Except indeed, of course, Miss Wyerley.’—She did not look in the glass when she had said this.

Repeating to herself Mrs. Parr’s words, she did not consider them as admitting of any certainty, that Goody herself knew whose the picture was. This decision spared her the pain of recall-

ing her immediately; but not able long to rest in this inaction, she, after having wondered many times at her long absence, sent for her, and had the satisfaction of hearing that she was gone to Miss Wyerley.—The circumstance did not now excite any displeasure.

On Mrs. Parr's return, being informed that the baroness had asked for her, she presented herself in an attitude compounded of childish pettishness and abject submission, out of which however she was presently thrown by Lady Lynford's saying in a tone of good humour, 'Come, Goody, we must put by our grievances till another opportunity, and now think seriously of this Thursday of ours—all *my* habiliments are, I believe, in readiness—do you know any thing of Lady Drumcannon's plans of decoration?—have you seen any thing? for I know you have been there.'

'I have been certainly there, I shall not attempt to deny it—I left word that I was gone there—I had no concealment—I thought indeed it was necessary to go and see what they were doing—and now, upon my word, I must say I very much question whether the old lady thinks about Thursday.'

'Then Miss Wyerley *has* told her what I said.'

'I dare say she has—but yet I must say, that

if Lady Drummecannon takes advantage of it, *I shall believe she is very glad of the excuse—I do not believe she has any thing ready but the point-lappets and an old hoop, and a pair of shoes that look as if they came out of the tombs—at least I have seen nothing else—I just ventured to ask Miss Wyerley what colour my lady would go in—She did not seem to know exactly—but I think at last she said *purple*.*

Lady Lynford shouted, but she was not disposed to distress her informant, who proceeded with revived courage.—‘Nobody can dislike the old lady more than I do—but as for Miss Wyerley, I really pity her; for I think she is a poor, unprovided, ill-used creature—like——’

‘Like yourself,’—said Lady Lynford smiling—‘but come, Goody, do not brood over trifles when we must consider.—You know my general good will towards you, though, I confess, I am sometimes rather abominable.—But how shall we get at the viscountess’s real intentions? I should not like to be jilted at the last minute; and you rather shake my confidence in my presentation, even now.—As for my cold, I will not have it thought on; but, somehow or other, you must get me information. I do not like to send, after what has passed; but could you not volunteer one of your interviews with your friend Miss Wyerley, and

on those hints that I give you, procure me the information which you know I want?’

As the want of sound judgment is no bar to the possession of sagacity, any more than the want of pretension is a barrier against presumption, Mrs. Parr might understand that, in this requisite information which she was ordered to obtain, was included whatever she could learn, not only about the court-dress but the miniature. Glad at any rate to dispel the cloud that had enveloped her, and clearly seeing which way the baroness’s ideas led, she repeated nothing more of what had already passed with Miss Wyerley, but setting out on a new embassy, brought back a most favourable report of the viscountess’s disposition and readiness, with a very conciliating message from the lady in disgrace, which obtained credit, as it intimated that she had confined the knowledge of her suffering to her own bosom.—Lady Lynford felt this as an escape, and was almost ready to fancy herself obliged to the person whom of all others she most despised.—O ! what will not our petty interests render us?—our great and real interests never demand half the sacrifices we voluntarily make to those which it is least commendable to consult.—Her ladyship condescended to intimate that she should think no more of what had occurred, but that Miss Wyerley would be received by her as

heretofore—nor was even the *entrée* of the *boudoir* mentioned as a point not to be conceded.

Here were now four persons in a very peculiar situation of confidence—Lady Lynford was confidential, for her own purposes, with Mrs. Parr—Mrs. Parr, under this novel influence of fancy-friendship, unwittingly betrayed the baroness to Miss Wyerley, who again, with a view to her own advantage, reported some things to the viscountess.—Opportunity had not yet occurred for taking Mr. Bray into the council, or he would have made a fifth; but no one of these persons gave the smallest return of confidence.—Lady Drumcannon did not trust Miss Wyerley with the least part of what her reports produced in her mind.—Miss Wyerley communicated to Mrs. Parr only as much as she felt necessary to her own furtherance; and Mrs. Parr, in her great concern to promote the indulgence of her ‘dear charge,’ was particularly desirous to conceal from her, every thing that carried the appearance of design.

Time, not to be recovered, had already been lost in the baroness’s introduction; and she was living comparatively in obscurity. Her father had been grievously mis-led in his choice of a chaperon, and merely by not calculating on the possibility, that, while he was preserving his existence in the extremity of the island, there might be changes

taking place in the interior; which, made obvious to him, would have given another direction to his plans. — His lordship had remembered Lady Drummannon a very pretty young woman, claiming the distinction of ‘smart and lively,’ rather than of any attributes more substantial : her black eyes were too sparkling to admit of any question as to the language they spoke ; and a well-turned ankle apologized for any vanity of exhibition. Had his lordship been at that time in the mood to marry, he would most probably have allowed this lady a place among the candidates for his heart or his honours ; and she might have been the mother of Lady Heraline Beltravers ; but if he did deliberate, he for once did it too long ; and she bestowed her person and her very considerable fortune, as if on purpose to mortify all who had aspired to her, on the least worthy of her suitors, the profligate son of a poor Irish peer, who, after having spent whatever he could lay hold on, and infringed on her jointure, was reduced to a life-income which expired with him. Nothing during the time of Lord Lynford’s knowledge of this lady, appeared to him to render her a bad choice for the purpose. In his eyes, her want of principle was good nature, carried, perhaps now and then, a little too far. Having been distinguished as a dancer, he pronounced her elegant ; and singing

very agreeably by ear, he considered her as accomplished ; but her great recommendation was, that she saw all the company in London, and was, he imagined, still a coveted chaperon.

Disappointed and out of humour, as many young women would have felt on the delay of her public entry into the world, the baroness deserved commendation for making the best of an untoward circumstance. She had not indeed tasted the sweets of what is called pleasure, sufficiently to withdraw her lips in disgust from that which she did not find unpalatable:—she had not yet arrived at the period when custom and fashion were to tell her what to think and feel, and when she was to judge, not ‘ by her own use,’ but ‘ by others’ eyes’ —she was content, at present, to make use of her own ; and her industrious pursuits leaving her no lagging hours, she did not know that she was not one of the most enviable of mortals.

Lady Lynford had not wanted for society. Having yet no decided taste for public amusements, she could, without regret, forego them for the sake of making her appearance at them, under the designation of ‘ the young baroness presented last Thursday.’ Her mornings had their intercourse ; and she met and entertained her young associates and their relatives, quite as often as it was agreeable to her to sacrifice her evenings. Hi-

therto she had behaved very passably well to the old viscountess: she had 'dined her' occasionally, had sent her chair to fetch her, and had aired her in the parks; but now things must, in some way, alter—her presentation must take place in less than two days, or Lady Drummannon declare off:—if all went on well, she was at the acmé of her maiden glory;—if obstacles intervened—she *had* thought with great composure of the return to St. Emeril's; but now indeed there was some little power of detention in this hint respecting the miniature; and till the effect of it was ascertained, there was no danger of fresh offence being given to any one who stood within the entail of this interest.

The whole of Tuesday passed without any communication between the houses of Drummannon and Lynford; and the baroness's sense of her own dignity, determined her to let Wednesday noon arrive, ere she stirred in the final arrangements for the morrow. Her men had their new clothes, and she meant to be conveyed in her chair, following that of Lady Drummannon, which was to be fetched for the occasion, from the chair-maker's, where, for want of stabling on her own domain, it stood at livery.

At so early an hour however on Wednesday, as to prove to all who knew the old lady's habits of

life, that this business of writing had been transacted the night before, Lady Lynford received a note from the viscountess, ending with a feigned pretext of hurry at the moment, and regretting, that ‘ she could not, just then, spare Miss W. or hope for a leisure moment herself in the forenoon. She felt the necessity of a meeting previous to the agreeable affair of the morrow ; but as she could not ask her ladyship to venture out at this crisis, she was compelled to offer herself to partake just what her table afforded, at her usual dinner-hour, or at any earlier hour that her indisposition (which she hoped to hear was entirely gone off), made more advisable.’—‘ Here is integrity,’ said the baroness, as she read on through the undrilled ranks of illegible calligraphy—‘ she has not a morning she can call her own, and yet she will dine with me, whenever I please :—lies are very slender bodies ; they show themselves from very narrow crevices.—Well ! never mind—I shall be glad to see her—and I will be gracious, and name her sweet companion.’

In this acquiescing spirit, the baroness wrote her more than polite reply, and, without much stomaching, ‘ hoped Miss Wyerley’s occupations did not extend beyond the dinner-hour which her cold, now very nearly well, did not oblige her to make earlier than usual. Her chair should

attend Lady Drumcannon at the last minute, that she might not encroach too much on her time.'

The viscountess came, but no Miss Wyerley—civil intimations, however, indicated that she accepted the honour though not the pleasure, which an accompanying gesticulation from the old lady's head, gave the baroness to understand rested rather with *her* than with the party herself.

A very delicate dinner gratified and distracted the viscountess—her eyes once sparkling, now did their utmost, in the lower exertion of twinkling—she looked into—nay, she almost *bowed* into every dish, distressed, when soup and fish were out of question, to decide on the disposition of her palate towards *fricandeau* or patty, *en attendant* the game, and the promised delights of pastry. Lady Lynford did the honours of her table with more than usual grace—every thing in her house was done as it should be; and she had some genuine feeling about her, when her guest, almost under the influence of the excellent cordial wines which had, years before, taken possession of the spacious cellars, looked at her, and with tremulous lips said, 'This puts me in mind of my best days at next door.'—'Poor soul!' whispered the

baroness with an involuntary shudder—‘ Lady Drummannon, take half a glass more of the Constantia—it will do you good.—Send half a dozen pints to Lady Drummannon to-morrow morning,’ said she, *sotto voce*, to the butler.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE recent indisposition afforded an excellent reason for making the snug *boudoir* the withdrawing-room after dinner.—Lady Lynford, herself, assisted the viscountess and her crutch-headed stick up the stair-case, and placed her most comfortably on a sofa, near the fire, exactly in such a situation as to make her notice the little green silk curtain—but in vain—the full-fed faculties were now inclined to repose, and she was scarcely accommodated in her seat, before the falling back of her heavy head, and the consequent separation of her jaws, might have afforded hopes of easy plunder—had there been aught to steal,—to a tooth-drawer.—This was time lost; but Lady Lynford could wait—she took a book; but was presently interrupted by a sudden start from her companion, with the question, ‘Ha! does any body want me?’—Being assured that she was not *wanted*—and, not even now, could the baroness repress a wicked emphasis in her reply—she again, most audibly, relapsed into her former indulgence.

But, alas! it soon became matter of cruel necessity to disturb her.—A note was brought from

her house, requiring an immediate answer.—Lady Lynford very gently roused her—but this was doing little towards conveying to her apprehension what she had to understand.—She could not, for some time, get her eyes asunder; and, when this was partially accomplished, she had left spectacles, and the glass she wore round her neck, at home.—There was no resource.—Let the billet contain what it would, Lady Lynford must read it, if it was to be read.—The task was neither long nor difficult:—the despatch ran in these words:

‘ My dearest Lady D.

‘ I am so surprised, I can hardly hold my pen.—Your favourite, Col. W., is just come in—he *must* see you; but he has but an hour to stay.—Can you come home, or can you let him come to you? My kind compliments to the baroness.

‘ Yours,

‘ H. W.’

There could be no question, in such a case, what was proper to be done—and Lady Lynford was, of all persons, the least likely to seek an answer to such a question. She said every thing proper to her visitor, and then calling her upper man-servant, she charged him with a very polite

request to Lady Drumcannon's friend, that he would take the trouble of coming there to her.

Knowing as well what was due to herself as to others, when the door opened for the admission of the stranger, she withdrew by one in the opposite corner, and remained in the apartment which she used, in general, as her morning sitting-room.—She stirred up the fire to give her the light she wanted; and, ringing for Mrs. Parr, desired her to find out, without bringing her at all forward to a stranger, whether Lady Drumcannon's friend had dined, and, if he had not, to do whatever was proper, in the best way the time admitted of.

Mrs. Parr's comprehension did not seem at its brightest; but she was, at length, made to understand, and went away to obey.—She presently returned, saying, 'she had, herself, made the inquiry of the gentleman—that he had dined at a coffee-house, but would be happy to take coffee with her ladyship, at her own time.'

'I do not know that I quite like this,' said the baroness.—'What sort of a man is it, Goody?'

'By what little I saw,' said Mrs. Parr, 'rather a middle-aged, genteel-looking sort of person—he might, indeed, be any thing, for what I saw of him—for I never look at men—I seldom know one from another.'

Lady Lynford might perhaps smile:—but, to secure herself against impropriety, she said, ‘ I will go, because, not to go, looks awkward ; but I will have you, Goody, with me—so order the coffee to be sent in, in about twenty minutes, and let me be called when it is ready ; and, do you come and sit here, and go in with me.—I am not so fond of the lady, as to be very fond of her associates.—I see too many of them—many more than I shall suffer to visit me.’

The morrow furnished sufficient conversation for the short interval ; and, when informed that the coffee was going in, her ladyship rose, and the door being thrown open before her, she entered the *boudoir*, with rather too high sense of her own consequence to aim at producing any sensation. Mrs. Parr followed ; and they found the stranger-gentleman seated on the sofa, by Lady Drumcanon, endeavouring to make her hear his detail of some great exertion of speed. The old lady introduced him as Colonel Wanston, a very particularly deserving favourite of hers : the colonel bowed to his own eulogy ; and Lady Lynford assumed a distant politeness.

The coffee came, and assisted in the introduction of the visitor, by calling forth his gratitude for the very welcome refreshment. Mrs. Parr, in her professed want of observation, had not given him

his due : he was, perhaps, thirty-five years of age, or somewhat more ; but, to Lady Lynford's apprehension, he appeared by far the handsomest man she had ever seen : his manners were rather reserved than affectedly prepossessing—his enunciation was deliberate ; and there was a peculiarity of pause, as if to recollect himself, whenever he replied to what was said : there was a gravity of character about him tending to inspire respect ; and as he appeared to have kept good company, had seen much, and related well, he soon proved an agreeable conversationist.

Maps were brought in, to enable him to describe to Lady Lynford, a route, by which he had travelled, on recent service. The necessity of looking at the same thing, obliged the baroness to admit him near her ; and she had scarcely done so, when poor Lady Drumcannon made sad faces, and looking piteously towards Mrs. Parr, begged to be assisted out of the room.—‘ A tea-spoonful of brandy would remove her spasm ;’ but at present it was, ‘ O dear ! O dear ! very sharp.’

Lady Lynford rose, and would have followed ; but the attitude of the viscountess forbidding this, she said to Mrs. Parr,—‘ Send for your niece ; and let her take care of Lady Drumcannon ; but, do you come back here.’

Mrs. Parr's movement said, ‘ I will,’ and

Lady Lynford was again sitting down, the colonel, with nice propriety, retreating to an increased distance, when, in the little bustle of moving, Lady Lynford perceived that the green silk curtain, before her miniature, was undrawn—she had not left it so, when she quitted the *boudoir*; and she felt disturbed by the discovery.

Mrs. Parr did not return immediately: the time of her absence admitted of the colonel's saying, very respectfully, yet with the perfect air of the world, 'Lady Lynford, I wish the state of society admitted of being ingenuous, without being indecorous—but, as it does not, and we must take things as they are, dissimulation becomes, sometimes, an imposed necessity; and, under this necessity, I am at present, I confess, acting.'

The baroness felt uneasy: she rose. The colonel made way for her, as if to pass.

'Have no apprehension,' he said—'For the world, I would not detain you—go to Lady Drummannon; but, as you go, listen to me, while I point to that exquisite work of your pencil, that honoured miniature, and claim it as the likeness of what I once was.'

'The *accidental* likeness, I presume,' said Lady Lynford, endeavouring to sustain herself.

'No, on my honour—the miniature, from which you took the trouble to copy this, was ex-

pressly painted while I was made to sit for it—I can produce to you a duplicate, only varying in the colour of the dress—my mother, who excelled in this art, painted this, and many more.’

‘How came my father to have it?’ said Lady Lynford.

‘*That*, your ladyship is more likely to know than I am. From what Lady Drummannon tells me, Lord Lynford appears to me, not to have known whose it really was. She says, he called it the young Pretender.—Now, certainly, I never had any *pretensions* to be so called; therefore I must conclude, that he purchased it accidentally, and might be imposed on—an auctioneer must have known that, as the likeness of an obscure individual, he had less chance of a good price than if he gave it a great name—he might see some representative of an old Jacobite stock, among the bidders, and hope to kindle sparks of loyalty to the exiled family. This I can affirm, that it must have passed through an intermediate hand or two to have come to sale—my fond mother painted me often, but it was uniformly for presents—her situation in life did not admit of any thing mercenary; and it is very probable, that the heir of some friend, to whom she gave it, having no value for it, might dispose of it with other effects—nothing more likely—the fine collection of minia-

tures at Strawberry-hill, must have been got together in the same way—and libraries are often possessed of the finest copies of books, through the same failure of interest.

Lady Lynford listened, and was convinced.—She had not yet moved her eyes from the objects that lay beneath them, but now she ventured to look up, comparing, by a momentary glance, the now confirmed features of him who had been talking to her, with those which she had so fixed in her memory.—There was no contradiction, though there was no positive resemblance.—Allowance made for the progress of time,—the commanding person and fine style of features before her, might be the fulfilment of the promise given in the beautiful miniature.

‘And now,’ continued Colonel Wanston, retiring still farther, ‘your ladyship will permit me to leave you, with the satisfaction of thinking that this singular accident does not place a barrier against me, in the common acceptance you would otherwise give to a stranger. Its effect upon *me* can only be an increase of that profound respect which your exalted rank and peculiar situation must inspire, and which, I own, is very much increased by the honour I have had in being obliged to your hospitality, and being admitted even to this short personal acquaintance. If that delicate

jealousy of your own dignity, which I am confident you must feel, prompts you to command perfect silence on this occurrence, suffer me to anticipate you, by assuring you, on my honour, as a gentleman and a British soldier, that it shall never pass my lips, nor shall it ever encourage me to do more than make my bow if we meet this spring, as we may do very much, in the same society.—I fear I have a little disturbed you; but I could not go away from your house under such a cloud of dissimulation, and especially as I was told, you were curious to know whose the picture was. My time, just now, in London, is very short, or I should make a point of inquiring at your door to-morrow, before I quit town—my only possible moment would be that when, I hear, you must be at the drawing-room—I am no drawing-room man—levees I am obliged to attend—but drawing-rooms I detest—they exhibit the worst side of human nature.’——

The colonel was almost at the door, and Lady Lynford was recollecting the bell, when Mrs. Parr entered, looking rather ruefully, and said that poor Lady Drummannon had found herself so ill, that she had begged to go home, and was just then put into the chair.—She had desired Lady Lynford might be told that she *hoped* to be

able to go with her the next day, but she should hear very early in the morning.

‘Then,’ said the colonel, ‘there is a possibility that your ladyship’s engagement may be deferred.—I shall certainly take my chance.’

The baroness, even now, could behave with propriety. Standing near a table, and somewhat propped by the pressure of her right-hand fingers on it, she, in silence, made one of her most graceful curtsies. Mrs. Parr roused the attention of the hall-servants; and the colonel saying that ‘he should call at Lady Drumcannon’s, where he had ordered his chariot to wait,’ took his leave, in a manner equally decorous.

Perhaps Mrs. Parr might feel that it required more courage to enter the room again, when the baroness had had time to think, than to remain there while she was under the influence of this visit. Whatever her ideas—or whether she had any or none—she remained—and, of course, made her first speech the common inquiry of such a mind, under such appearances—‘What’s the matter?—What *can* be the matter?’

‘You know very well,’ said the baroness, in a deep grave tone—‘what is the matter—it is your own doing—and indeed, Mrs. Parr——’

This was stage-direction enough for Goody.—She removed her dear charge from the stooping

posture in which she was sitting, leaning her elbows on the table, covering her forehead with her hands—and drawing her back on the sofa, began her palliating narrative.—‘ She had, indeed, unthinkingly, done what she now was grieved for :—she certainly had shown the picture to Miss Wyerley—but this she had already confessed—this was no new crime—and how was she to guess that poor Miss Wyerley knew the person ?—and how could she foresee that she would tell Lady Drumcannon, and that Lady Drumcannon would contrive all this ?—*She* had not a head for such contrivers—people who knew more of London ought to be sent to take care of young people there.—She was a plain person, not used to things of this kind—she meant well, and she supposed every body else did the same.—She could not but say she wished there was somebody else to take part of her anxious charge—it was too much for her ; and if she was not to be trusted, she wished Mr. Meryon to be spoken to.’

Such a proceeding was not, just now, in the circuit of Lady Lynford’s intentions. She condescended to soothe Goody, and then begged to be left alone.

Not to think on what had occurred, or to

think even on the probably-to-be-repeated disappointment of the morrow, in preference to it, was impossible ;—and not to think on it with interest, would have been to be proof against that which had its claims ; but the state of Lady Lynford's mind was not that of any other female so circumstanced. Against captivation by person—against much that would have mis-led others—against all vulgar pouncing upon an object with a resolution to obtain it by the process of a steeple-hunt, she was armed by pride and sedateness. If neither the tutelage of her childhood nor the better discipline of her forwarder years, had given her experience of the world, her natural elevation of rank and the inculcation of regard to it, had made her cautious.—She was not one in a crowd—she had not to wind her way amongst a concourse, where only one in many might be of lower height than herself, and where, consequently, she could see her way only a few paces before her. She stood high ; and she had a comprehensive power of vision ; she knew her own worth, and she was not inclined to lower the *agio* of it.

But still, however informed her mind, there was much to be done which did not occur in the every-day practice of the world. Though little disposed to fall in love, or hastily to make use of her power of choosing to whom she should resign

her independent superiority, she had imbibed a prepossession not instantly to be conquered or to be converted into an uninteresting reality. She might have seen, and seen often, the person from whom she had just parted, without feeling that any wish would be gratified, or her probable happiness made certain, by an union with him ; but to the miniature her heart still clung ; and she felt it almost the demand of a renunciation to give up her ideal attachment, merely because, if continued to the picture, it must be the right of the original.

She now found how vain is that persuasion, that on the attainment of some one object, happiness must ensue !—Often had she said, ‘ I would give the world to know the person here represented ! ’—The longing was now indeed satisfied ; but it seemed only to have waked her from a soothing dream.

If there was any thing which propitiated her in what had just passed, it was the dignified candour with which she had been treated. The superior age of Colonel Wanston gave him the authority almost of a being of the former generation. He did not appear at all a man to be aimed at by any woman ; all finessing—all blandishment—all the gold or silver-pointed missiles of love, would have been, as far as she could judge, blunted on the shield of his natural character. In short, he

seemed as proud as herself, and able to show himself as haughty; and for this conviction, she had exchanged the sweet delirium of her fostered prepossession.

Every circumstance respecting the purpose of her introduction to London, having awaited the event fixed for the morrow, there had been little talk, amongst the party, on that completion of her destiny dependent on her matrimonial choice. She was not a young woman to be joked with in any way. Even Miss Wyerley's ignorant wit, half a frown would send to the antipodes; and Lady Druncannon, in conversing on the prohibition in Lord Lynford's will, never got farther than an observation, that the best security against infringing it, lay in seeking a husband for her, amongst people too low to emigrate, and too poor to afford the chance of an heir born out of their own cabins.

Recollecting this never-to-be-forgotten call on circumspection, Mrs. Parr, as she obeyed the baroness's desire to be left alone, and construed it her own way, might have been heard to whisper to herself, 'Well! the worst come to the worst, there is no danger here; for his name is a pure English one—I will answer for it, he did not even come in with the Conqueror—little as I know—for I know there is not a W in any language but English.'

For the sake of still more perfect solitude, Lady Lynford went to bed an hour before her time ; and, under the plea of fatigue, evaded questions put to her, as she was undressing, by her woman, as to the next day's toilette. But her bed was a place of less repose than her *boudoir*. Colonel Wanston's expressions came up, as it were, on a wheel of memory—she arrayed them—she repeated them—she conned and construed them—and her opinion of his candour was not lessened.—What he meant, indeed, by stigmatizing the royal drawing-room, which, under the then dynasty, she had conceived to be the rallying-point of national virtue, she could not understand :—but a future accident might explain this.

‘ What should she now do with the miniature ? ’ was a question—‘ she almost wished she had never—no, she did not wish *that* neither—but it was indelicate to continue it where it was, now she knew the original to be existing—it might lead to suppositions which she should resent as unjust and unfounded.—Yet, to remove the picture was ungracious, and almost an expression of contempt—it might, too, draw on her the very suspicion which she was endeavouring to shun—it might be supposed she was not indifferent enough to the original, to trust herself in its company.’

Mr. Meryon was fortunately not recollected

just now; or here would have been another question.

There never shone out of the heavens at this early season of a genial spring, a finer sun than that which rose on the morning of this great day 'of note and preparation.' The baroness had slept from two till six, and was refreshed; and when her woman attended her, and let in on her chamber the lovely light, she did not feel very apathetical as to her duties: she flattered herself that Lady Drumcannon's indisposition must have subsided under the necessary fasting of sleep; and she began to talk confidently of the affairs of the dressing-room. No warning of disappointment had come round the corner at nine o'clock:—she thought all safe, and suffered her hair to be put in training for its best arrangement.

Not choosing, however, to trust entirely to the general construction of silence, in rising from her breakfast, she ordered an inquiry to be made at Lady Drumcannon's door, and presently learnt that her ladyship was too ill even to be spoken to, and that there was no chance of her leaving her room that day, nor for many days to come.

Lady Lynford will be forgiven by all who do not demand too much of human nature, if her sympathy in the viscountess's illness was merged

in her vexation for her own disappointment. The inconsiderate rudeness of not only making her wait, but, even at last, obliging her to fetch her mortification, was no small provocation; and her expression of it stopt her messenger in his delivery of the reply. Waiting for a pause, he added, that Colonel Wanston was breakfasting at Lady Drummannon's, that he was then going to the Horseguards; but, that at three o'clock, if her ladyship was kept at home by this accident, he would do himself the honour of paying his respects to her.—Lady Lynford did not repeat her expressions of anger—but, on the other hand, she sent no reply, though the man seemed to expect it.

‘Well then,’ said she to Mrs. Parr, who came in, indignant at this new disappointment, ‘I suppose I must wait till the next drawing-room—but positively, if this old woman is not ready by that time, I shall desire her to turn me over to somebody else—verily I shall want summer-clothes, or be old-fashioned.’

She did not, through the whole morning, send any inquiry after the viscountess—she was too angry—Miss Wyerley did not step in, nor was she wished for: affairs were now out of her hands.

Not knowing what else to do, the baroness ordered her groom and her horse, and chauging her dress, went amongst the nurses and children, and

early health-seekers, in the parks, telling every one who accosted her, of her cruel disappointment, and her determined resolution:—lamentation for the former, particularly ‘as it was to be a most brilliant drawing-room,’ was ready on the tongue of each who heard her; and her resolution was made more resolute, by the approbation it met with from the sympathizers. She did not hear Lady Ann, in her affectionate parting, tell her younger sister, that ‘Heaven must have heard her prayers, and interposed in her behalf—that now she might venture to the drawing-room, without fear of being eclipsed entirely by that paragon of grandeur,’—nor did she listen to an old earl’s regret, that, ‘by the next drawing-room, his son must join his ship.’

She took her airing; but it did not hold out till near three o’clock. She changed her dress, went through the *boudoir* into her morning-room, and there sitting down, she read, or tried to do it.—She was in debt to Mr. Meryon; but ‘she could write to him at any time—she must, indeed, tell him how she was circumstanced, and take his advice—she would do nothing without it—on *that* she was determined.’

Not till half-past three did the colonel come—but then he *did* come, in much apprehension for ‘his poor old friend Lady Drummecannon, who

remained very ill, and whom he should make a point of watching through this alarming attack, let what would be the consequence to himself.'

There was no occasion for Mrs. Parr's presence in a morning-visit, and especially in one from a friend of Lady Drummannon's—the introduction spoke for itself—therefore she was not called.—The colonel could amuse very well for half an hour, and in a way that could not be misconstrued. He wanted books to elucidate his remarks; and her upper man-servant was intelligent, and used to fetch what she wanted. Of course there was, this day, no interruption from lessons; and the time passed agreeably and rapidly. The baroness was sufficiently put at ease, to ask the colonel, what placed the royal drawing-room under his anathema—and he answered, 'I will tell you ingenuously, as I always will any thing you do me the honour to ask me. If I had a daughter to introduce, it should not be at court, because I consider it as imposing some connexions, and precluding others equally desirable.—You see only one part of the nobility at St. James's—with all these, as the drawing-room is, I confess, to the honour of its mistress, kept as pure as it *can* be, you are drawn in to acquaintance—and in your case, Lady Lynford, you may be assured, that every soul who has son, brother, cousin, nephew, or god-son, will

seize upon you as lawful prize :—whether you like or dislike these people, you *must* be on certain terms ; and were you to know them ever so disagreeable in private, you *must*, because they are received at St. James's, receive them yourself.—Now what, I will ask you, whose integrity I perceive the world has not hurt—what say you to the remaining sincerity any one can hope to possess, after seven years' intercourse of this kind, when, without a choice in your own associations, you have been, all that time, acting in precisely the same way to a set of people, half of whom you may despise on knowing them ? If you like to keep an assembly-room, and to be the mere lady-president of a house of reception, go to court, and you may have plenty of custom ;—but if you would have select friendships, make your own society, uninfluenced by all prescription.'

Lady Lynford's experience did not warrant her to contradict this ; but she replied, ' Still it is, I conceive, a necessary form—I hope, at some time or other, to see foreign countries ; and, to be in the best society abroad, I must have been presented.'

' True,' said the colonel ; ' but it is always time enough for that, when you are going ; and deferred in this way, it protects you from the evil I describe.'

Her ladyship now spoke again of Lady Drumm-cannon—she called her ‘ poor soul,’ and said she should be anxious to know how she was in the evening.—She even thought herself fortunate that the attack did not occur later—she might have been seized at the drawing-room ; or even if after it, she should have been fearful that the exertion made for *her*, had occasioned it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

COLONEL Wanston, in the most friendly manner, confined himself to London for the next ten days, during which the viscountess was invisible, and Miss Wyerley never left her. He came, at some part or other of every day, to make his report to Lady Lynford, who bore her anxiety for the sick viscountess, without injury to her powers of pleasing. She did not omit writing to Mr. Meryon—she detailed her recent disappointment—she described every thing that could be described ;—but as to Colonel Wanston, she had not quite settled what she should do—she would see a little farther. —In general, she sketched the outline of every new acquaintance, ‘ but *one* she surely might omit occasionally—it would be impossible to continue telling an old man every thing that occurred—she almost wished she had not begun upon that plan ; but still, dear Meryon deserved every thing from her.’

At length, the old lady’s complaints gave way,

and she was declared convalescent. The colonel hastened from town ; and Lady Lynford was not displeased to receive a message from Miss Wyerley, expressive of Lady Drummannon's wish to see her.

The episode of the illness, most fortunately, had so broken in on the common narrative of affairs, that there was no immediate necessity of adverting to any thing unpleasant. The invalid required consideration, and was not to be questioned as to the little drama that had formed the under-plot to her confinement. Miss Wyerley, though looking considerably foolish, in her first interview with the baroness, contrived, by setting chairs, and by every form of officiousness, to fence or deafen herself against what she merited. Her duties performed, Lady Drummannon, with more than her usual cloud of brow, expressed a wish for her absence, in words little less peremptory than an order to be gone ; and then, when alone with the baroness, after lamenting the dear price at which she paid for her nice dinner, in the fees of her physician, and the probable bill of her apothecary, she began to speak confidentially on the subject of Colonel Wanston, in the form of a warning to Lady Lynford. She told her that, without having had any direct communication with the colonel, she could

not but apprehend, from the manner in which he spoke of his visits, that he was most incautiously suffering his peace of mind to be interested in this new acquaintance—that, for the Indies, she would not have to answer for being the cause of any thing serious ; and therefore she must beg her dear baroness to act very decidedly in considering their acquaintance as a mere temporary thing, beginning with her unfortunate illness and ending with it. It was impossible that Mr. Meryon, or any of her friends, could approve such a connexion for her. The colonel was sixteen years older than she was : he was in the army, and he had risen, and must rise, rapidly : he had a small private fortune and good connexions, but could, in no way, be a fit match for her. ‘ In one point indeed, my dear,’ said she, ‘ I could recommend him to you ; you would be sure of him for an Englishman ; for I believe he might be born in the next street : at least he is registered at St. George’s—but you may meet with thousands with this requisite. All I wish is to cut the matter short ; for I cannot bear my favourites to be made uneasy—it is of no consequence to you, my dear baroness ; but to Wanstons it might prove a serious disappointment, if suffered to go on—he is a grave character ; and I have often noticed that those who seem the most

proof against tender affections, let them take more hold on them than more lively people.'

Lady Lynford could listen and comprehend, and show that she did so by her manner; but to reply, unless she meant those in the adjoining houses to share her confidence, would have been very indiscreet: the conversation therefore could not last long. Miss Wyerley was called in to spin about the room in some of her juvenile alacrities; and having now recovered her courage, and hearing Lady Drumcannon name Colonel Wanston, she at once broke the ice, under which she had been kept down by Lady Lynford's freezing power; and asking the baroness if she 'did not think him a most charming man,' talked of 'days of yore, when he and she were called the two inseparables.'

This was not to be borne. Miss Wyerley was every moment growing more odious; and some change of feeling in the baroness, seemed to render her pretensions to intimacy with Colonel Wanston an unpardonable presumption. When she asked herself why she felt so, she could only resolve it into the immeasurable distance between the distinction of his accomplished mind, and the pert vulgarity of Miss Wyerley's—she could not bring herself to probe deeper.

But returning home from her visit, her sensations were still more distressing. She considered

Lady Druncannon as assuming a right to direct her, which never having been called out, she did not know could exist. And she felt that, if she gave way to this, her boasted independence, and every privilege connected with it, was gone—while, by attempting to oppose her, she took upon herself a responsibility far too weighty for her management.

She was now, indeed, alone ; and, after the agreeable excitation of the daily call to which she had quickly become habituated, she felt that she was so.—Instead of betaking herself to any employment, though various means of pleasant occupation lay around her, she sunk into a chair in complete listlessness. She moved away from the reach of a large pier-glass : she sate looking at the fire, without seeing it ; and, when she withdrew her eyes from it, she began to think she had been asleep and dreaming. But this deception did not long protect her from the wounding thorns with which her path seemed bordered — she would now gladly have exchanged, for her former blind uncertainty, the feeling of terror on this committal to her own judgment, of remorse for the concealment that opposed her application for help, and of something little short of disgrace in the choice her heart seemed making for her. At one moment, she decided on quitting London and flying

to her tried friend for shelter and defence against herself.—At the next, she was contriving how to erase all that had passed from the page of her history, and to reinstate herself, without the pain of such a confession, in her declining dignity. All was confusion and uncertainty.

Excusing herself from an evening-engagement, she ate her un-relished dinner with Mrs. Parr, and began to feel still more decided on flight. It was not a frequent state of mind with the baroness, to be afraid of speaking to her dependant; but, in this instance, it required a little preluding to inform Goody of her determination; and disliking her still more than ever for this necessity, she began, in the least conciliating way, with sentences that said tauntingly, ‘I suppose I need not tell you *this*’—and ‘you must, if ever so stupid, know *that*.’—Mrs. Parr, in the least resenting manner, seemed to say, ‘I am just able, stupid as I am, to comprehend *this*’—and ‘I have a faint glimmering of *that*;’—but when ‘her dear charge’ got so far as to say, ‘I am so miserable here, that I would give the world to be at home in Devonshire—I must go back to St. Emeril’s to be near Mr. Meryon; for, as to *you*, you are nobody, nay, worse than nobody, by way of protection.—O! how I wish dear Meryon had come with me!—*I will* not stay here:’—Then, Mrs. Parr could speak out, and

array a host of objections to so violent a proceeding. She had even enough of the equity-lawyer, to question whether the tenour of Lord Lynford's will, admitted of this return to Devonshire. 'In her opinion, and, as far as she recollected, there was no option named—her ladyship was to reside in London six months, and two were not yet expired; and, as to any thing uncomfortable about the picture, she could not see that there was any cause for fretting—the thing was explained—it was all over, and there was no need to say any thing more, about such a trifle.'

Had the baroness proposed any thing short of this Spartan self-denial, Mrs. Parr might have bestowed a second thought ere she had replied; but, as the measure was presented to her consideration, it had not two sides, and, therefore, she had no cause for hesitation. Her mind was undergoing still a greater transmutation than that of 'her dear charge;' but, as its features were smaller, their expression was less evident. Her little cunning had been able to conceal from the natural acumen of the baroness, a small affair of her own concern, which, with the early determination that might have been supposed to belong rather to a great character, and the manœuvring which the inexperienced often take for the operation of wisdom, she was now bringing to a most important crisis.—

Such a process is not worth the detail : she had angled, if not for the *heart*, at least for the seat of worldly prudence, in Lady Drummannon's nominal chaplain, Mr. Bray ; and, having first joined in all the expressions of contempt and dislike uttered by her principal—after affecting a tenacity to orthodoxy, far beyond Lady Lynford's profession of duty to the established church—after having sheltered herself, on all attempts at discussion, in her reliance on 'good Mr. Meryon's doctrines,' she had first sunk, indeed, into a lower tone of conviction, and then into something little more defensive than silence—but, internally, she had ended all debate, by a process equivalent to mixing the cards to hide a lost game—she had suffered the proximate object to obscure the light of which she boasted ; and, if she did not adopt the vagrant tenets of Mr. Bray, she bade her own hold their tongues while she listened.—The affair was, at this time, in prosperous train : Miss Wyerley afforded the facilities of meeting : the baroness's employments and engagements left Mrs. Parr many hours to herself ; and when she had attended Lady Lynford in her carriage, to some little party of young persons, where the lady of the house, on request, took on herself the duty of Lady Drummannon, she knew, that till the hour when the carriage was again ordered, she was safe.

The servants did not betray her, and she was too prudent to betray herself.

She had never before had any thing in the shape of a lover ; nor could this representative of that character, have come within her reach, but for his inferiority to his own station. Whenever Lady Lynford was the most severe on his meanness of person, the sordidness of his habits or the poverty of his mind, she lent another round to the ladder, by which Goody Parr was mounting to matrimonial consequence ; and, ‘ Very well : he will do for *me*,’—were the words in which she silently replied to these disparaging contumelies.

For any thing that had the appearance of betraying her trust in the opposition she now presumed to make to Lady Lynford’s commendable inclination, she thought herself justified by what she called ‘ her anxiety for the happiness of her dear charge.’ Wounded by Cupid herself, she saw, in imagination, the blood flowing from the wounds he inflicted on others. When she found the baroness musing or uneasy, she sighed, and told herself that she knew too well, by fatal experience, what she was now undergoing. That she should be hostile, therefore, to Colonel Wanston, whom she knew ‘ her dear charge’ pre-disposed to love, was not, justly, to be expected of her ; especially as the conniving at a foolish action, in her

superior, was the readiest mean to save herself from her sarcastic censure :—and, as there was no danger of sinning against the law laid down, and she saw no reason for restraining Lady Lynford from conferring a benefit, her conscience did not give her, at present, any very loud warning to be cautious.

When we are told, that ‘evil communications corrupt good manners,’ and yet continue to communicate with evil, perhaps we make a large allowance for the little resemblance which the world now bears to what it was, at the time when the observation was modern. But the character of truth does not vary with modes and habits ; and though instances may be adduced to prove that evil communications do not always *obviously* corrupt good manners, nothing can prove that the moral sense is not injured by them ; and, like the faults in painting, in music, in style of writing, the evil, however imperceptible to the uninformed, will be striking to the apprehensions of those who have made what is right, their study and their aim. Nothing was less probable than that a mind such as Lady Lynford’s, should suffer itself to be influenced to its detriment, by suggestions from Mrs. Parr. Had Goody revealed to her, her own little romantic contingency, she could, even now, have given her advice against which there could be no

appeal ; but, at this moment, her own uncomfortable feelings laid her open to any quack-prescription for her relief ; and when she had heard the reply to her proposal, departing from her natural integrity of judgment, she argued with herself, that, if the person placed over her, did not start at what disturbed her, she herself had no cause to be alarmed.

But, attempting to be at ease in a new situation, did not restore Lady Lynford to the enjoyment from which it had removed her.—She lost her industry—she was indifferent as to exercise or amusement. She saw the next drawing-room-day go by, and did not regret that Lady Drummannon was still unable to attend her :—she made no proposal, as she had said she would do, for the appointment of a vice-chaperon :—and now, in despair and apathy, she suffered herself to be smuggled into public, when she fancied dissipation might afford relief from the oppression of her spirits. Her attentions to the old viscountess were redoubled, and obtained her credit. She spent evening after evening with her and Miss Wyerley, and even saw no offence in the jargon of Mr. Bray—for from these persons alone, could she hear of Colonel Wanston.—She understood that he was detained out of London on duty ; but, at length, hopes were given of his return, and the

day was fixed when he was again to shine the luminary of two houses.

Not a syllable had ever escaped the baroness's lips expressive of the uneasiness of her mind. If it betrayed itself, it was through the medium of her complexion, the relaxation of her activity, and the languor of her deportment. Fearful of making it perceptible, yet unable to make a vigorous effort against it, she resorted to disingenuous pretexts; and even in writing to Mr. Meryon, she laid a stress on the increased imbecility of Lady Drummannon, which, if he asked himself a question as to his ward's probable welfare, was to account for any change in her style, which might make it less matter of confident security to his affectionate solicitude.

The colonel arrived, and then a new order of things took place.—He came to make his acknowledgments to the baroness, for 'the great attention Lady Drummannon had experienced from her, in her frequent visits and meritorious sacrifices of pleasure, to politeness and friendship—in her obliging care to anticipate the wishes of her recovering appetite, and the accommodation she experienced in the frequent use of her carriage.'—This was all safe ground; but when, Mrs. Parr being called out of the room, he proceeded to substantiate his

claim to credit on the business of the miniature, by producing, indeed, a duplicate of the portrait which she had copied, in which every variation was an advantage, and the superiority of the artist over the copyist was almost humiliating ;—nothing but Mr. Meryon's presence—for the ghost of her father could not be expected to rise in broad daylight—and, perhaps, not even this, could have arrested the headlong *penchant*. If the colonel was aware of his hopeful prospect, he did not make any irregular exertion to secure it : he seemed rather to declare off : he told his age, his narrow means, his confined views in life—he seemed to fear that his profession might be a lure—he could not be responsible for his own endeavours in it—it did not suit his choice—at least, ‘the youthful impulse that gave it its charm, was dead :—and to retire from a world, of which, having no stake in it, he was almost weary—to purchase a small farm, and turn his sword into a plough-share, was, at times, when he was most vexed with the corruption of mankind, his most ardent wish.’

The baroness did not *tell* him that there were plough-shares in abundance at St. Emeril's without resorting to this expedient.

No more talk now, of drawing-rooms or court-equipments—the form was given up, the narcotic influence of the colonel's antipathy combining

with the viscountess's impossibilities. Days, now made more valuable because their number must be few, followed, without any exertion to use or enjoy them, beyond what a sickly vitiated taste prompted; and of any thing better there was no hope, unless some more decisive movement should admit of a reference to Mr. Meryon, the expectation from whose good nature, was now become little short of presumption that he would betray his trust.

Without any *éclat*—without surprise or harts-horn, the matter came to its issue; and Lady Lynford, when she recollected the most interesting of the colonel's visits, found that the sum-total of their conversation on her part, amounted to an acceptance of him, and an undertaking to bestow her hand on him, whenever he could procure the consent of her guardian, without which, while a minor, she *must* not marry, and, in her present disposition, fancied she would, at no period, even when exonerated from his guardianship, *wish* to marry.

But here occurred an obstacle. It was, at least for a time, necessary that the colonel's proceedings in this affair should be kept as private as possible. There was a certain young lady whom Lady Lynford met at Lady Drummannon's and at

other places, who, she was told, nourished a most unfortunate passion for Colonel Wanston, and to which some circumstances, such as he could not overlook, forbade his making any return.—She had immense wealth, was very beautiful, and though not nobly born, was respectably connected; but she was so nearly an idiot, that the goodness of her choice in bestowing her affections, stood single in her debts to common sense.—Whenever she met Colonel Wanston, her persecution of him was evident; and that it was prompted and encouraged, nothing indicated.—It, however, claimed, and met from him on whom this distinction was bestowed, a very gentlemanly consideration: he soothed the poor foolish girl; and, in his distant arrangements with the baroness, said decidedly that, ‘on no account, should her imbecile mind be wounded with reports that must preclude her childish hopes. He knew that, in a few months, when she too would be of age, she would be removed to the farthest part of Scotland—that there she would soon forget him, and he should feel at liberty to think of his own unmerited good fortune, which, highly as he must prize it, he could not purchase at the risque of what this poor Ophelia might do, under feelings of disappointment.’

Lady Lynford had made no sacrifice of the generous feelings of her nature, when she struck out of the path of prudence and injured the polish of her integrity. She applauded the kind compassion of Colonel Wanston—she encouraged it—she acquiesced in the measure of profound secrecy;—and she felt that this necessity allowed her to postpone the awful appeal to Mr. Meryon.

The secret, however, could not be hermetically sealed, so as to prevent the viscountess, her dependant, and Mrs. Parr, from inhaling some of its particles; and, as no one of these persons had any purpose to serve by pretending ignorance, the first opportunity was taken to release Lady Lynford from the restraints of caution before her friends. Her attention distracted—every avenue to new ideas choked up with the effervescence of those she had fostered, it was vain to pay masters for attendance, or to attempt to be industrious for them. The colonel had no wish for her shining: he had no taste for her pursuits: the visits of instructors might cross on his—and they were therefore dismissed, and every thing that told they had been employed, was put out of sight. The loss of amusement was made up by the vicissitudes which her situation afforded. Colonel Wanston was about to be fixed on duty, twelve miles from

town, and must remain so till the middle of July : his opportunities, therefore, of seeing her, were sufficiently precarious to give zest to her gratifications ; and if the fever consequent on this over-excited state of nerves, wore her, still it was fever, and supported her with itself.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE first advantage which Mrs. Parr made of the baroness's step down from her 'bright meridian,' was to unfetter herself by a declaration of her own interesting *affaire de cœur*: she had the precaution to engage the viscountess to divulge it for her; but, not even the respect due to the channel through which the information came, nor even the recollection of what she herself was doing, could repress the bitterness of Lady Lynford's irony. The lady had, about ten years, the start of the gentleman in the race of life. She was tall, and now, by dint of care and good living, bulky. He was little, meagre, long-necked, as if nursed in a neck-swing, had short legs, made somewhat shorter by too early pedestrianism, and in his visage bore marks of that sportive discipline of the jocose, which, by the smart stroke of a heavy hand, at once flattens, and gives an upward direction to an infant's features. In every point of comparison, no two persons could less resemble each other than this incomparable pair. —Mrs. Parr's all-pellucid neatness was to as-

sociate with a man to whom nothing could give cleanliness of appearance, and whose use of snuff seemed to justify him in his disregard of it. In her situation, she had acquired habits of liberality, which, even on a small scale of expense, would have shown themselves gracefully. Mr. Bray was, indeed, little inclined to spare; but his own indulgences were made commensurate with his means. The early fetters put on Mrs. Parr's manners, had made her, though not polite, civil,—and the necessary regard to her own interests, had given her an emulation of the good opinion of others. Mr. Bray, inconsiderate and unfeeling, a clown by nature, and rendered vain and authoritative by vulgar applause, had no regards for society: he asserted, contradicted, equivocated, and, when quite at a loss in argument, and at the mercy of his opponent, he would look round him, for some one on whom he might, by nods, winks, and shrugs, impress the conviction of his superiority.—His various ways of being disgusting and odious, must have been seen to be understood.—The baroness concluded her degrading *badinage*, with ‘You take him, Goody; as you would do a damaged velvet; because, if it were not damaged, it would not come within reach of your purse, and you must then be velvetless.—Be advised: con-

sider how little you know of the man's previous life or his natural temper—you may be deceived, to the ruin of your comfort and your respectability.—You must suppose you see the best of the man, because, if his interest allures him, it is of importance to gain your approbation. Let him follow you to St. Emeril's—I will make the creature welcome; and then you may consult your friends—you may have the benefit of Mr. Meryon's opinion, and you will be safe and feel yourself safe.'

If circumstances, as in the French 'Proverbes,' were significations by movements, Lady Lynford might have heard the 'Nosce teipsum' of the sage, in the words, 'Colonel Wanston, my lady,' when the door was thrown back, and he was introduced.

He was yet with her; and she was fearing he was about to depart, when a letter was brought her from Mr. Meryon. She threw it aside carelessly, without breaking the seal, unwilling to give the colonel a reason for shortening the little time he could bestow on her, and not having *now* that painful impatience to get at the contents of her guardian's letters, which she had felt when they were in all their vigour of interesting and amusing. The languor that ensued on her feeling herself

again alone, made her forget that she had not read it:—to get rid of this languor, she went out on horseback—on her return, she made visits—she was engaged to dinner and for the evening ; and, even the next day at noon, the letter remained unopened. It was then found and taken up ; and with a feeling very nearly of reluctance, she unfolded it. It was nothing of obvious importance—a very short letter, written in haste, merely saying that, on the next day after its reaching her, she might expect a visitor who he ardently wished might prove acceptable to her.—‘ He is coming !—he is coming himself !—he has heard all ! He is coming, I am certain,’ said she, as she rang the bell to inquire for Mrs. Parr.

Poor Goody, when informed of this warning, having no choice of opinion where Lady Lynford appeared possessed of such extraordinary sagacity, could only answer ‘ Yes ’ and ‘ No.’ Necessary as it was to consider many points of prudence, under this threatened pleasure, nothing was yet arranged, when the faint roll of a carriage driving to the door, as it could be heard in the back-apartments of the house, and then the more distinct volubility of the knocker, seemed to preclude all circumspection, and to throw every thing most valuable, at the capricious mercy of chance.

What Mr. Meryon might have thought, *had* he entered, and seen colours, little less strongly contrasted than those of York and Lancaster, on the cheeks of the two females, must be supposed : he would scarcely have recognised his ward, under the glowing mantle which his expected approach cast over her—Mrs. Parr he might have called to mind, with a due allowance for her having just risen from her grave.

But it was not, after all, Mr. Meryon who entered, or who was the visitor of whose coming the baroness had been apprised.—It was the Earl of Winchmore.

It was not her ladyship's frolic at this moment to be saucy. She recollected indeed the former incipient treaty, which his lordship's mother had endeavoured to open for him in his absence ; but with this, she considered him as having no concern. She had known him as a boy and a lad ; and her present situation freeing her from all doubt and embarrassment, she meant to atone to herself for her fright, by the enjoyment of perfect ease. She made her surprise appear of the most gratifying kind, and condescended to say that she was glad to see him.

But when to the usual questions, and as usual answers, there succeeded a dead pause—a pause that said no more than other pauses, yet seemed

to say all that all others ever had said—when her eye crost on Lord Winchmore's, and she saw his directed to her, as if to ask if he might venture to speak—O ! what would she not have given to escape !

‘ Lady Lynford,’ said his lordship, ‘ I shall ruin my cause by want of power to plead it—May I hope that Mr. Meryon——? Not a word of encouragement?—Bid me be silent, Lady Lynford, and then, perhaps, I *could* proceed—Not a word :—I must then at a risque——’

He paused—then resumed—‘ You know, my dearest madam—no, I should say you do *not* know, that I have now attained the age to which my father postponed my majority.—I arrived *only* last week in England. My wish is not now merely to settle, but to settle in the way that will, under Providence, ensure happiness :—I naturally look to *you*, when this wish most urges me to think of fixing my affections :—I am no Adonis—I am no despot.—If I could win your good opinion, I should hope you would never have reason to wish you had not bestowed it.—On my situation I will say nothing, but that, had it not justified my present proceeding, I would have been silent.—Not a word !—Then I *must* and *may* proceed. You know my mother—do you not think such a woman would prove an invaluable friend?—The

just opinion the world entertains of her, gives her an advantage of situation peculiar to herself—she is prepared to receive you with open arms and the warmest heart—I left her in Dorsetshire, when I had scarcely seen her ; and I have had an interview with your excellent guardian. I came on directly hither ; but on a moment's notice, my dear mother, who is still, you know, comparatively a young woman, will be in London, if you honour her by wishing it.'

' Lady Winchmore is too kind—and your lordship is——' ' But,' added her ladyship, rising and turning aside—' I can accept no such proposals.'

' No *such* proposals, Lady Lynford?'

' No, my lord, no *such* proposals. I mean what I say—or, at least, I generally say what I mean.'

' But what mean you, my good lady, by *such*?'

' Why, I will tell you fairly,' said her ladyship, endeavouring to turn the *comédie larmoyante* into farce : ' I mean that I cannot accept such proposals, because it is my odd humour, not to choose to marry a man even of my own rank, and much less, of any above me.—My revenues, you know very well, would be a drop in the ocean to such a man as you, and such a match would be as much in the common way of pro-

ceeding, as that between a banker and a merchant's daughter, *Mr.* with his 3000*l.* a year, and *Miss* with her 30,000*l.* down—I believe that would be pretty nearly *our* proportion; for I take for granted that your lordship's rent-roll is of about double the value of my humble possessions.—Now, I need not tell you, that I have a great deal of pride—much more pride than vanity.—If I were vain, I should accept your lordship and all your many good things; and were I Heraline Beltravers with half a dozen boy-brothers, I would do it, for the sake of indulging *my small vanity*—but, as I am circumstanced, I must think first of *my great pride*; and this, to tell you honestly the truth, would be much better pleased if I married some little tidy half-pay captain, who must owe all, but bread and cheese and his watch-string, to my bounty, and therefore would be on his knees, night and morning, to thank me for my wealth.—Now do not be affronted, my dear lord—you will easily find some other countess—I could tell you of half a dozen—but—alas—*me*—you cannot, cannot have.'

His lordship took his hat, bowed, and, saying in a choked voice—'I beg your ladyship's pardon, I was mistaken,' went hastily down stairs, calling for his servants himself.

'What an escape!' said the baroness to her-

self—but shame and confusion followed her self-congratulation—she put her hands before her face, —‘ But what will he tell Mr. Meryon?—O! I should have thought of that—I wish I had asked his address—I could have sent him a note to shade off a little of what I said.—But what is there I *can* do!—Why, I must write to dear Meryon—What shall I say? the less the better.’

Ah! indeed the less the better, if all was to be in the same style of bravado.—There are cases so bad, that they oblige us to choose what is simply bad, as what is best. But these cases are not often made for us—we generally make them for ourselves.

Delay, under such excitement, was torture. She instantly replied to Mr. Meryon’s billet-letter.

‘ My dearest Sir,

‘ Lord W. has been here, and will give you a strange report of my reception of him.—You will think me mad or foolish—but I am neither—I am not going to abuse him.—The man is in himself very well—he says he is no Adonis; and this I grant.—He talked very absurdly, almost foolishly—and seemed desperately at a loss—but I believe this was my fault; for you know I can *disconcert* very tolerably, when I

choose it.—But he had the absurdity to talk of his mother, and that set me *en herisson*, remembering her former proceedings—so I played mad or foolish—which you please—to drive him away—and succeeded quite to my satisfaction.—Do not send any more to offer themselves—and do not believe half that Lord W. tells you: you have the truth from

‘Yours in haste,
‘H. L.’

The transaction would not bear a retrospect. Something was to be overcome when it rose to remembrance; but her ladyship consoled herself with thinking that she had, however violently, extricated herself from an embarrassing situation—so embarrassing, that it requires some ingenuity to devise a way of escape, so effectual as that preposterous one which she had taken.

‘I am a little advancing in poor Meryon’s labyrinth,’ said she to herself, when she determined to dismiss the subject finally from her thoughts. ‘Never mind—I must submit to go on just now—I cannot go back—and at worst, I am strong enough to break through, if I cannot find my way out—I will tell no human being what was the subject of this visit—there is no occasion—I shall tell Goody it was matter of compliment.—She will believe me, even were I to tell her that his lordship was

turned shoemaker, and came to solicit the honour of my custom.'

But for the delusion in which the baroness had hooded her natural discernment, she must almost have repented that she had given such 'a hostage to Fortune,' as that connected with the disposal of her heart. The colonel must go; and how were her days to be endured without him? Pursuits renounced because no longer interesting, could not be resumed with energy:—London was growing odious. The society to which she was most accustomed, was flavourless; and there was a halo of concealment collecting round her, which made her almost shun strangers. She did not carry her head, by some inches, as high as a few weeks before; and those who were afraid of her, and who formed no small proportion of those who knew her, had begun to talk of her improved affability, because she did not look in the face those to whom she was speaking.

Her correspondence with her guardian had, in many days, produced only one letter from him, to which she had very briefly replied. His had been written when it might be supposed he had again seen Lord Winchmore, and heard from him what had passed.

Entering on the subject, he said: 'I cannot

express to you my mortification on this abrupt dismissal. Far be it from me, to presume to direct you, in your important choice of the man with whom you may pass a long life—may it be a happy one!—But, my dearest child, what have you rejected? or rather what have you *not* rejected? God grant you may never have cause to repent!—I will make all allowances for the waywardness of taste in such a matter—I know the eye must be won to gain the heart, unless the reason has told the heart not to trust to the eye:—but still, surely you have been precipitate!—Lord Winchmore might not acquit himself to perfection—he might be too much interested—many a man appears to a disadvantage at such a moment—and I can very easily suppose, on my knowledge of what you *can* do, what you *might* do to embarrass him.

‘ I do not think Lord W. has told me the worst—I do not think he *would* tell such a worst; and in truth, I think you have drawn a more disgraceful likeness of yourself, than any one else would have done; but if your reply was, only in substance, what you state it to have been, it calls for correction. I will take it as he represents it: he says he finds you prefer marrying beneath your rank, for the pleasure of being generous.—Romantic!—nonsense!—diametrically opposite to your natural

character and your former opinions—and an intimation which once getting abroad, might cost you dear.

‘ If you say that it was merely the first plea that came into your head, to make a disagreeable man desist—and, as I hope I shall hear, that it is as foreign as ever from your sentiments, I shall be more easy ; but still I must protest against such dangerous trifling. Were Lord W. not what he is, I should be apprehensive that he might divulge your imprudence, and let loose on you, half the adventurers of the metropolis.—I shall be more at ease when I have you safe back. Forgive my parental anxiety.—Write quickly to your anxious friend.’

It required a little more assumption of jocularity, to get over the duty enjoined.—Gladly would the baroness have remained silent—but so sadly was the aspect of her concerns now changed, that she thought with horror of what might expose her to the danger of her guardian’s yielding to the stimulus of his anxiety for her, and, at some unexpected moment, presenting himself before her, to satisfy himself as to facts.

She therefore wrote by return of post, and at the last minute, in these frolicsome terms :

‘ This is to certify to Thomas Meryon, clerk,

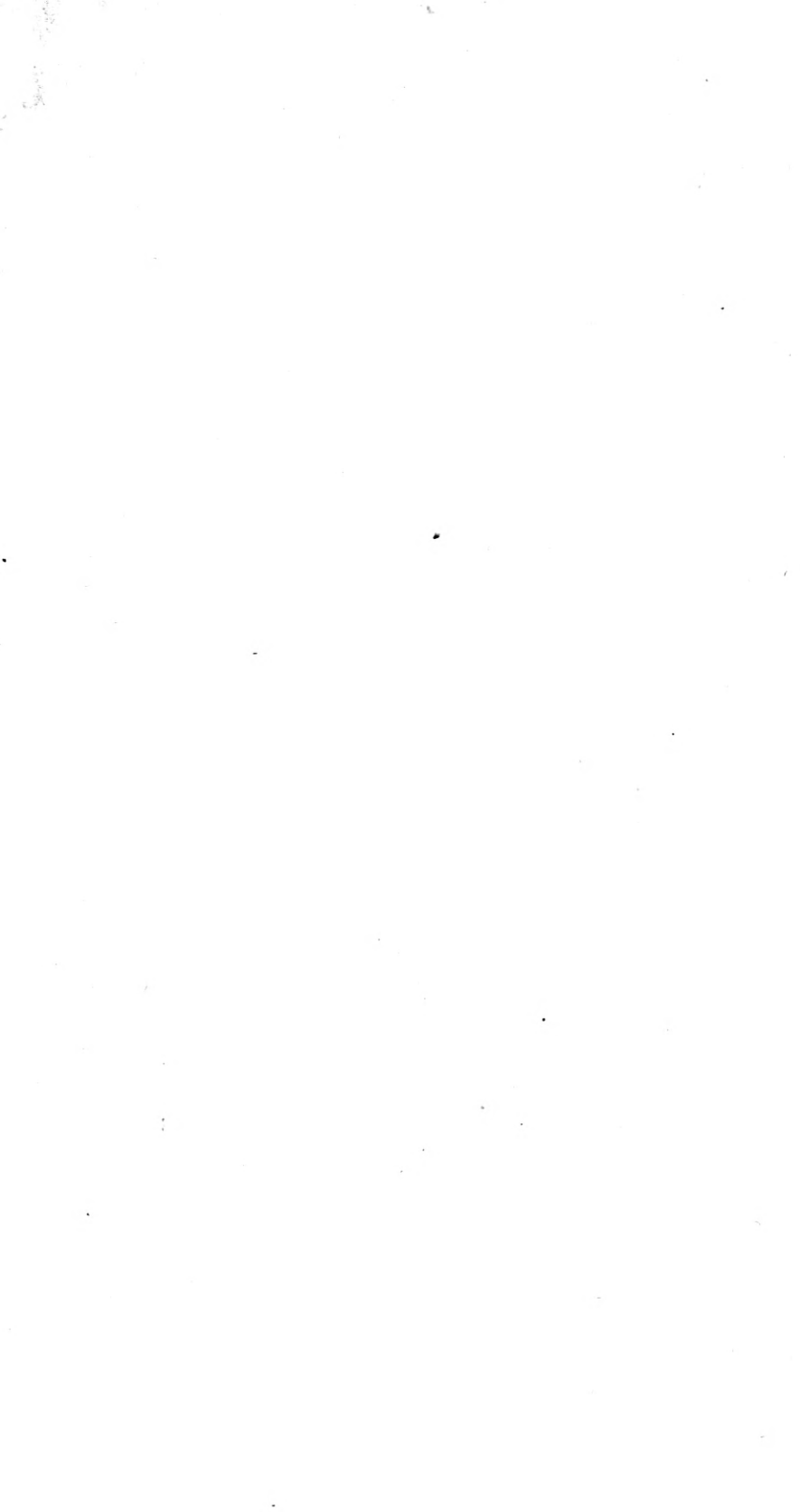
and one of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the county of Devon, that Heraline Beltravers, Baroness Lynford, hath no intention of disposing of herself, as she declared to the right honourable the Earl of Winchmore—that to get rid of his lordship's unacceptable presence, was her sole purpose. And, furthermore, the said Heraline Beltravers, Baroness Lynford, undertakes for herself that her pride shall be duly consulted, whenever she deliberates on the weighty subject of matrimony.'

Whatever reception Mr. Meryon might give this attempt at the ludicrous, he remained silent. It might, and it did probably, satisfy him that his ward had only done very unbecomingly—but his silence indicated that he did not immediately forgive it.

THE END OF VOLUME I.







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